Mysteries of the Kingdom

W. C. Stevens

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Mysteries of the Kingdom.

BY

W. C. STEVENS

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Preface.

The title of this little book on the Lord's second coming may seem to be rather pretentious. But a personal word will at once explain its meaning and relieve it of all appearance of high assumption. It is scarcely fifteen years since the Lord's coming was to the writer a mystery, that is, an unrevealed truth, a hidden hope. He confessed to an inquirer that he never thought upon the subject, that he had no interest in it whatever. He considered it as a purely speculative subject. The many volumes upon the opposite sides of the subject of the premillennial coming of Christ he had considered as purely theoretical, and he had never had interest enough to plod through all of these works and reach nothing but a conjectural conclusion. This inquiring friend was alive with the hope and confessed that it dominated him by day and by night, but he neither raised any argument nor attempted to enlighten the ignorant one. But he probably prayed that light might be given. A couple of months afterward, the writer was being pressed gently in heart by the Spirit, and the promise was distinctly heard inwardly: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom." It was deeply apprehended as the voice of the Spirit, the promise was embraced at once in the inmost heart, with the sense that everything divine nearly was a mystery, but here was the

offer of knowledge as a gift from God. There was no thought of any reference to the kingdom of the coming Christ. Very soon after, perhaps not more than a day after, the voice of the Spirit was again heard in the heart, saying: "Jesus is coming, and you are to look for Him." The mystery of "the mysteries" was revealed; all theory and conjecture were done with; the communication of God was believed without a shadow of uncertainty or question. It made no difference what any one else believed or asserted, the mystery had been made known from God. And it was not hard, after receiving so graciously from God the heart of all mysteries of the kingdom, to be persuaded to let Him go on fulfilling His promise, with no further human effort than a mere open-minded, prayerful perusal of the Scriptures day by day in regular order, with no particular pursuit even of this subject. Thus from time to time, and here and there, the faithful Promiser has been revealing the mysteries, that is, the things which God wishes His children to know, but which cannot be truly known but by the Spirit's illumination.

This little book is simply a result. It does not aim to be a treatise upon the Lord's coming. It is not to be read as the fruit of study, in the ordinary sense, least of all as a study of the literature of the subject. It merely passes on some bits of revelation that seem to the writer to have been opened up to him by the Spirit through the Word. It consists mostly of quite informal, unstudied talks given during some waiting days at

Berachah Home, at Nyack-on-Hudson, New York, last autumn. It has been written up and brought out under the pressure of duties in the Missionary Institute, so that no pretension could be made in the way of thorough care, literary or otherwise. The only hope is that some hearts may be blessed with messages from God through these pages, and begin to cry fervently with the Spirit, "Come!"

THE AUTHOR.

Missionary Institute, Nyack, N. Y., April, 1904.

I.

THE SURE LIGHT OF PROPHECY.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:* knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i. 16-21).

These words are of most important value to us in opening our study on the Lord's Second Coming, in that they furnish us with certain clear and fundamental guiding principles.

1. We are shown what the focus of all prophecy is, namely, that which constituted the focal point of the transfiguration of Christ, the manifestation on earth of the power and majesty of the incarnate Son of God. That manifestation was then made for a very brief hour to a private company of three of our Lord's Apostles; the like manifestation is to be public and permanent at His coming again into the world. The transfiguration was the private rehearsal of that man-

ifestation of Christ upon earth which is the key to all prophecy. The transfiguration was denominated by Christ as being a sight of "the Son of man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28), or of "the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1), or of "the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 27). While these passages absolutely identify the transfiguration with the second coming of our Saviour in respect to literal and glorious nature, they do not identify the transfiguration with His coming as a fulfilled event. This is evident, not only from all other testimonies, but also from the very passage itself which we have taken from Second Peter. The Apostle is expressly speaking of Christ's coming as yet future, but as both attested and illustrated by the transfiguration.

Then John, who was another of those three eye-witnesses of the transfiguration, speaks of the coming as yet future: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him" (Rev. i. 7). Here the Apostle puts an emphasis upon "every eye shall see Him," which is doubtless drawn from that former private view. Then notice how similar in sight and in effect to the transfiguration is the vision which the Apostle John goes on to describe (Rev. i. 13-17): "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

2. We are shown that the supreme certainty of the

Lord's coming is afforded not by even such a testimony as the transfiguration, but by the word of prophecy. The former was special and private; the latter is public and common to all. The former was, indeed, spectacular, overwhelming, but it was transitory; the latter is addressed, not to the senses, but to faith and intelligence. The former is not to be discredited or discounted. Peter speaks of it with full appreciation; but he adds, "*We* have *also* a more sure word of prophecy." He gratefully acknowledges the superior advantage to himself, as well as to us all, of the word of prophecy. In a sense, those three were better off than we; and yet, in the main, we are as well off as they, and they were not perfect without us, or without our part. The expression "more sure" is important and illuminating. It signifies that, in point of certainty about the fact and the nature of our Lord's coming again, Peter, James, and John were no better off with the memory of the transfiguration than we are with the word of prophecy. This is in keeping with the way in which God has ever honored His word above all His name. It intimates to us at the outset, that prophetical Scriptures are of no minor importance to us.

3. We are shown our great need of the word of prophecy. Not only are the prophecies absolutely reliable, they are also absolutely necessary. Without them we are helplessly in the dark, "in a dark place," (verse 19). This world is "a dark place." It is wholly devoid of the light of the kingdom of God, because the King, who is the light of the kingdom, is utterly out of sight. There is nothing in the world to suggest the "power" and "majesty" of King Jesus. Hence power and majesty are found in earthly nobilities. Man accepts sublime titles and honors, in State and even in Church, as though they never were to be put to shame by the "brightness of His appearing." There is noth-

ing in the trend of the world or in the plans of the world that indicates the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, all heads up in man, not the Son of man.

And there is nothing, apart from the light of prophecy, even in the present dispensation that speaks of the coming of the King. No further evidence is needed for this assertion than the entire absence, outside of circles of believers who are walking in the light of prophecy, of any "word of bringing the King back." The sincerity, the zeal, yea, even the spirituality of the Church in general does not need to be discredited in explanation of this. It is inevitable that, apart from the word of prophecy, we shall be "in a dark place" religiously as well as secularly. The light of prophecy is as much needed to guide our service aright as to keep us from entanglement with the world-spirit of this age.

It may be asked, Are there not signs of His coming even now? Yes! But they have to be interpreted by the prophecies. Jesus complained during His first advent that the religious leaders did not perceive the signs of their day. But He did not mean that there was anything going on which naturally pointed Him out as their Messiah. So may we say, there is nothing happening now which, apart from the interpretation afforded by prophecy, suggests any connection with Christ's impending coming and glorious kingdom. Verily, the word of prophecy alone relieves the rayless, inky darkness of this world and of this dispensation, so far as indications of the appearing of Christ are concerned.

But here is "light," light "that shineth." It is not enigma that perplexes, it is not ignis-fatuus that deceives; it is practical, reliable, shining light. Unto it we do well to take heed; we do not well to neglect it.

The remainder of verse 19, introduced by the word "until," is not easy to explain with certainty. We might throw the clause "in your hearts" back into direct connection with the words "that ye take heed." This would make attention to prophecy to be a matter of the heart and not merely of the head. This is certainly an important principle. It would obviate much error and much controversy. The remainder of the thought would then be: "a light that shineth in a dark place, until" etc.,—until the new dispensation dawns, and Christ, the Star of that dispensation, the thousand-year day, arises upon the view of the world. If we retain the clause "in your hearts" in direct connection with the words "until the day dawn, and the day star arise," then we must take these last words in a spiritual sense, as a matter of personal, inward experience, and not as an outward, dispensational matter. The lesson would be, that we are to take heed to prophecy until the light of the coming day dawns upon our souls, and Christ becomes in our heart the Coming One as definitely as He has already come to be there the Crucified and Risen One. It is indeed most important that the Lord's coming should be more than a tenet of our creed, namely, that it should be a bright, living experience and power of our hearts. God's children need this in this dark world, and they need the word of prophecy to produce it.

4. We are shown how prophecy must be interpreted and understood. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." Private interpretation means personal, independent, exclusive interpretation. It means that some one, either through special personal understanding or through special favor of God, has the understanding, and the rest of us are dependent upon him for our understanding. We would not be invidious in illustrating the

matter. A German author wrote a commentary upon Daniel, which he closed with notice to all men that his commentary was the conclusion of the whole matter. Joseph Smith claimed to receive the key privately, and demanded the blind acceptance of his revelations by all men. Swedenborg had private visions which are the "light" (?) for all of us who have not the same visions. Mrs. Eddy is believed by many to give the private "Key" to the understanding of all Scripture. Others, without making such high pretensions, yet assume to interpret prophecy in the allegorizing and spiritualizing imaginations, each of his own mind. This is all folly and blindness, and can only blind others, because it is the very way which this passage declares to be the wrong way of prophetical interpretation.

Man's will and man's natural mind did not bring prophecy to begin with. Holy men were moved by the Holy Ghost to speak things clearly foreknown to God, but unknown and inconceivable to man. The prophetical Scriptures are simply history written in advance through the inspiration of the foreknowing Spirit of God. While it is intended to be perfectly plain as history before the event, yet it is not capable of mere natural, intellectual apprehension, as the natural man is able to read the Scriptural histories. The Spirit who inspired is needed to interpret. And the interpreting Spirit is a gift for all believers under proper conditions. This makes us all independent of one another, but dependent upon Him.

Will this not work confusion, each asserting his own view as taught by the Spirit, no matter how contrary to another's view? Just the contrary. The very criterion of the Spirit's interpretation will be the essential unity in diversity of those who truly depend upon Him. So far from one's being disposed to assert his views,

one will the rather guard against encouraging another to accept his view, without for himself searching the Scriptures with all his heart and in earnest prayer to see if the things given forth are true. So far from brethren controverting one another, denouncing and excluding one another, they will bow together before the sacred page under the light of the one only Teacher until they see more perfectly eye to eye. The author of these pages would not appear before his brethren with his "part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9) of prophetical interpretation, without first begging them to read his words according to this basis of unity.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

II.

THE THREE THREES OF CHRIST'S COMING.

The object of this chapter is to present the subject of Christ's second coming in an elementary way, so simply and clearly that any mind may gain a conclusive and practical view of the truth. Accordingly, the return of Christ to this earth will be presented under a series of three beautiful Scripture-triplets running exactly parallel to one another, each triplet necessitating the second coming of our Saviour for its terminal member.

I. The Three Appearings.

We have a group of three related appearings of Christ presented in one brief passage of Scripture, namely, Heb. ix. 24-28: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, *now to appear* in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world *hath He appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him *shall He appear* the second time without sin unto salvation."

Notice these three appearings in their relations of time and place. The first is a present appearing, the

place being heaven. The second is a past appearing, the place being this "world." The third is a future appearing: its designation as an appearing "the second time" classifies it with the appearing "once," which was an appearing in this world. Hence this future appearing is for "the second time" in this world. It is necessarily a literal and visible appearing, or it would be inconsistent to classify it with the former by the words "once" and "the second time." Indeed, the word "appear" always denotes bodily appearance. It is an expression designating the Son of God in incarnate form in distinction from His invisible spiritual presence.

Still, as many deny even the present bodily condition of Christ in heaven, it may be well to cite Col. ii. 9: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This proves conclusively that the present and everlasting existence of Jesus Christ is in a bodily state.

And that He is to be as literally seen again in the earth as when He was here before, is proven by the words from Acts i. 11: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The descent is to be as visible as the ascent.

Before taking up the next triplet we will digress, to remove from any mind certain false explanations of Christ's coming again.

It is claimed that His coming was fulfilled in the event of Pentecost. It should be enough to say that this event was characterized, indeed, by a personal coming, but not of "this same Jesus"; it was the coming of "another Comforter," the third Person of the Trinity.

Others connect His coming with the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A. D. This error arises from supposing that the representation in Matt. 24. 15-30 of

Christ's coming immediately after Jerusalem's greatest tribulation refers to that date. But such is not the case; this tribulation is yet to come, and will immediately precede our Lord's coming. Lu. xxi. 20-24 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, in 70 A. D.; but the passage shows that an indefinite period then follows, during which Jerusalem is trodden under Gentile feet until a final tribulation arrives and Christ reappears.

Other theories are equally untenable. Conversion cannot be confounded with Christ's coming. It is the sinner's coming to Him. Sanctification involves, not the coming of Christ, but the incoming of the Spirit. And as to the believer's death, so far from its being the coming of Christ, Christ's coming will mean escape from dying to the saints of that day.

There yet remain three passages over which beginners stumble very frequently. First, Matt. xvi. 28: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." This clearly means that some of that company should witness His appearing in His kingdom before they died. This was fulfilled "after six days" in His transfiguration, when Peter, James and John witnessed a rehearsal of the second coming of Christ, as described in the opening of the next chapter. Peter himself, in 2 Peter i. 16-18, indicates plainly that the transfiguration, which he had witnessed, was both the rehearsal and the guaranty of a still future coming of Christ.

Again, Luke xvii. 21: "The kingdom of God is within you." This seems to indicate that the kingdom of God is inward and spiritual, especially when taken with the words of the previous verse, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." But Jesus was speaking to hostile Pharisees, who certainly did not

have the kingdom of God within them spiritually. Hence the words "within you" simply mean, in your midst. Jesus meant to challenge them to accept Him as the Messiah, the King; while the other saying explains that for the time being the kingdom was not in outward appearance. A few verses later He gives to His disciples the strongest possible statement, that He should in due season be revealed in kingly aspects as vividly to earthly view as the flashing lightning. For the present He was the King *incognito*.

Finally, Luke xxi. 32: "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." The word "all" refers to the various signs of Christ's coming and the coming itself. What is the meaning of "this generation"? It could not mean the generation then living, for these things did not then occur. But it seems to be a case of the rhetorical "vivid present." The scenes depicted are so vivid before the Saviour's mind that He speaks of the generation which is to witness them as "this generation." And He means to say that the generation living when these signs begin to occur will live to see them end in His coming.

II. The Three Offices.

It is well known that Christ has three offices, those of prophet, priest and king. These are eternal in Him as Son of God. But they are revealed through His incarnation. In three stages of time He enters as a man successively into these three offices. And it is now to be noticed that the three appearings constitute His induction successively into these three offices.

1. Prophet. The prophetical office is a public office. Hence Christ had to come forth from God among the people on earth to be their prophet. And in his first earthly appearance He is commonly spoken of as a prophet, or as "the prophet," the long-expected one,

the one with whom no other stands comparison. See Acts iii. 22, John vii. 40, Matt. xxi. 11, Luke xxiv. 19.

2. Priest. The priestly office, on the other hand, is a secret office before the hidden presence of God and out of human sight. Hence Jesus must needs withdraw from sight in the earth and appear before God in heaven in behalf of the people. Accordingly the Scriptures which speak of Him as in heaven represent Him as appearing there as our High Priest. See Heb. iv. 14, vii. 26-28, ix. 11, 12. And notice, that He is represented as seated on high in a waiting attitude, expecting a further development in His career (Heb. x. 12-13, 37).

3. King. The office of king, again, is a public office. It is as necessary for Jesus to be personally and visibly present again in the earth to fulfil His office as King as it was the first time to fulfil His office as Prophet. This is of the greatest importance. How can we have a kingdom without the person of the king? The king must be known of his people and must publicly rule over them. Accordingly, Jesus Christ is always represented as the King in His coming again, and that the King of the Jews. His third appearing, or the second in the earth, is His induction into His kingly office. Thus the third appearing and the third office both terminate in His coming again as a necessity.

The necessity of Christ's return as King is further seen from His own most solemn testimony and from solemn divine testimony concerning Him. Jesus was brought to trial before two tribunals, the ecclesiastical and the civil; before the Jewish Sanhedrim and before Pilate, the Roman governor. Before each tribunal He answered all false charges with silence. But the true, though fatal charge, that He made Himself to be the Son of God, He frankly admitted before the Sanhedrim, and His doom was sealed. Before Pilate

the true accusation was that He claimed to be the King of the Jews. This He acknowledged and so sealed His doom (John xviii. 33-37). It is pathetic that He hung upon the cross under the accusation, "King of the Jews" (John xix. 19-22). This is according to the promise given to Mary (Luke i. 30-33), where it is as literally promised that He shall occupy the throne of David in Jerusalem as that He shall be called Jesus.

III. The Three Feasts.

There were three great annual feasts of the Jews: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. These were all types to be fulfilled in Christ. And it will now be interesting to note that the fulfillment of these three feasts tallies exactly with the three appearings and the three offices of Christ. We have all been familiar from childhood with the fact that Passover and Pentecost have had definite fulfillment in Christ. But not only have we never been taught that Tabernacles has been fulfilled in Christ, but probably we never heard that it must yet be fulfilled, or how it is to be fulfilled. Let us see.

1. Passover. This we know was fulfilled in Christ in His first appearing on earth as Prophet. See 1 Cor. v. 7.

2. Pentecost. This was fulfilled by His appearing before God in heaven and becoming our High Priest. See John xvi. 7. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent forth by our High Priest upon His Church in the earth in a new dispensation.

3. Tabernacles. We remark, first, that no fulfillment of this typical feast is recorded. And yet can it go without as definite fulfillment in Christ as the others? Certainly not. Moreover, it is to be remarked that the feast of Tabernacles is always represented in

both Old and New Testament to be the crowning, the supreme feast, frequently called "the feast," as if, comparatively speaking, there were only the one. Hence we would expect rightly that its fulfillment in Christ would greatly surpass the great events of Calvary and Pentecost. But what is to be its fulfillment?

It so happens that an important and extended passage in the Old Testament plainly answers this interesting question. Turn to Zech. xiv. In verses 1 and 2, that coming calamity of Jerusalem, to which reference has already been made, is described. Verse 3 states that the city shall be rescued from imminent annihilation by the Lord's intervention. Verse 4 declares that "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives," upon the very spot where He last stood before ascending. The physical convulsions attending His descent upon Mount Olivet are then described, and verse 5 closes with the words, "and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (verse 9). The manner in which He shall destroy in large part the great host under the Antichrist before Jerusalem is then described. Now read from verse 16 the description of the fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles. All nations and families of the earth shall come up in delegations every September to worship Jesus, the Lord and King, in Jerusalem, and receive, as we read in Isa. ii. 2-4, the law from His mouth. This Ecumenical Convention will be the millennial "Feast of Tabernacles."

Thus we complete our "Three Threes of Christ's Second Coming." These triplets form a perfect triad, and show the place and the necessity of our Saviour's return in personal, visible form as the long-promised King. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

We will close with five appropriate lessons of an

immediate practical nature. 1. Look for His coming (Heb. ix. 28). 2. Love His appearing (2 Tim. iv. 8). 3. Profess the coming of Christ (1 Tim. vi. 12, 13). Here the "good profession" of Timothy and the "good confession" of Christ are identified. Christ's "good confession" was that before Pontius Pilate, namely, the confession of His coming as King of the Jews. Hence, Timothy's "good profession" was the profession before "many witnesses" of Christ as the coming King of the Jews. It shows that it is but a part, and rather the lesser part, of our profession of Jesus Christ in this world, to profess Him as Son of God our Saviour only, without also professing His coming as King. He met His death upon the two confessions, and we do not stretch ourselves out upon both arms of His cross unless we stand with Him in both testimonies. 4. Prepare for His coming (1 John iii. 3). 5. Hasten His appearing (2 Pet. iii. 12), namely, by occupying till He comes.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

III.

THE SALVATION YET TO BE REVEALED.

In the previous chapter we noticed the distinctness with which the second coming of Christ is presented in Heb. ix. 24-28, as the final member of a group of three dispensational appearings; namely, His past appearing in the earth upon entering as a man upon His office of Prophet; His present appearing, in heaven, marking His entrance as a man upon His office of Priest for us; His future appearing, in the earth again, to enter as a man upon His office of King. We will get our basis for the present subject from a peculiar expression at the end of the passage: "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin *unto salvation*" (Heb. ix. 28). We scarcely need to dwell upon the clause "without sin." Of course it presents His second coming in contrast with His first on the score of atoning sacrifice. There is no need of His coming again to make a sacrifice for our salvation. But the expression "unto salvation" can mean nothing less than that there is demand for His second coming in the interest of our salvation. What can and does it mean?

Permit it to be postulated, at the outset, that, while we talk much of "present, full salvation," yet our full salvation awaits the second coming of Christ. There is a present salvation, which need not be minimized; but there is also a coming salvation. Moreover, just as Christ's first coming was unto the present salvation, so His second coming is unto this remaining salvation. And, just as the present salvation could not have been

realized without His first coming, so this remaining salvation cannot be realized without His coming again. This is certainly all implied in the words quoted, while not elucidated by them.

What an impulse to desire His coming this fact should impart to us! We can no longer look upon His coming again as of minor importance. How gratifying the thought becomes to us, in the light of the above fact, that His coming is imminent, pre-millennial, and that we do not have to wait until beyond the millenium for this remaining salvation!

We will find distinct corroboration of the fact of a remaining salvation, to be made good to us at Christ's coming, in 1 Peter i. 3-9, 13: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith *unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.*" Here is the same great fact of a reserved salvation. Does the "last time" mean the time of Christ's second coming? We continue: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory *at the appearing of Jesus Christ:* whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." This distinctly shows that the salvation yet to be revealed is not that of our souls. We add verse 13: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,

and *hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Language could not make plainer the fact that a great grace, or gift of salvation lies before us yet, to be obtained only by the second appearing of Jesus Christ in this world. This is made all the more impressive and significant, when we notice that our salvation at Christ's coming stands in contrast with wrath that He is to bring for others. "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10). "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 9). This contrast is more strikingly depicted in its connection with Christ's coming in 2 Thess. i. 7-10: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe—in that day."

We learn from these last passages, that the coming of the Lord is a time of momentous decision of destinies; when certain disobedient classes will be disgraced from His bodily presence and the glory of His power, while His saints are to be so affected that He shall be glorified and admired in them; not by them, but in and through them. A prince of majestic and admirable presence once constructed a *salon* all walled about with mirrors, so that as he strode through the hall his magnificent presence was beheld by reflection from every side and direction to which the eye of the beholder might be turned. So we have a declaration

here, that when Christ appears, He will not only be beheld and admired in His own proper person, but He will also be glorified and admired by a bodily reflection from any one of His saints upon whom the beholder may gaze.

The words of Peter, "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," also remind us of passages in the gospel of John. First, as to the secure keeping: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (x. 29). Then, as to what is to be given "in the last time," the time of Christ's coming: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but *should raise it up again at the last day.* And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and *I will raise him up at the last day.* . . . No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and *I will raise him up at the last day*" (John vi. 39, 40, 44).

In the light of previous passages, we see that "the last day" here means, not the last of all days, but a most important last day, the day of Christ's coming. What is its importance, and why is it called "the last day"? The thrice repeated declaration, "I will raise him up at the last day," shows that bodily resurrection gives that day its great importance to us, and that that day is the last day of mortality for us. Does the church of to-day attach the importance to the day of Christian resurrection and bodily glorification that she should?

Another passage speaks eloquently of this reserved salvation. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he

yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 24, 25). This does not mean that we have at present only a "hope-so salvation." Scripture teaches both assurance and experience of salvation here and now. But this passage, like the others, speaks of salvation in a sense which is as yet only a hope, not visible or experimental, but so sure to hope as to make us "with patience wait for it." The context gives us the clearest light yet found on the nature of this salvation. The causal conjunction of verse 24 throws our attention back upon verse 23: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" It is, then, our bodily salvation that is "ready to be revealed in the last time" and "to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is in Romans called "the *redemption* of our body." We have entered into the redemption of our souls by the cross. But our bodies were likewise redeemed; only we have not entered into the latter redemption. It cost as much; we must not give it lighter weight. If we do, no wonder if we do not attach full importance to the coming of Christ expressly to fulfill for us this redemption. Moreover, we have experienced the spiritual adoption into God's life and family; but there awaits the body the like "adoption" into the life and family of the eternal, immortal God. Just so surely as we have experienced regeneration of heart and have been made new creatures in spirit, shall we also experience regeneration of our literal bodies and be made new creatures in Christ in our outer man. This is so wonderful and inviting as to make the Lord's coming for this purpose unspeakably desirable. Let us consider a little more at length three points.

1. The value of this bodily salvation. "We groan

within ourselves, waiting for" this salvation. The Psalmist says: "My flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (lxiii. 1). This longing may have been largely stifled through ignorance and unbelief concerning God's redemption of the body in an actual sense; but the value of it will surely be appreciated when the experience comes. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who," at His coming, "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 20, 21). The highest appreciation of the power and glory of our coming bodily change is here expressed. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear," *i. e.,* come to earthly sight again, "then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Glory here is not a place, but a condition of outward, bodily appearance; and the time for our glory-appearance is when Christ shall appear again. We know how much is made of Christ's resurrection and bodily glorification as an integral part of the gospel. (See 1 Cor. xv. 1-4; Rom. iv. 25.) But notice what value is attached to the resurrection or bodily change of believers in immediate succession to His resurrection. "Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23). Here again the Lord's coming is the time set for our succession to His own glorious bodily change from humiliation and mortality to glory and immortality.

Let us now study 2 Cor. v. 1-4. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," *i. e.,* if the earthly, mortal condition of our body were dissolved, "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," *i. e.,* a bodily condition that is of God, eternal. "For

in this" present mortal condition "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house," or bodily condition, "which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle," as it now is, "do groan, being burdened" with mortality: "not for that we would be unclothed," disembodied and "rid of our old body" altogether, "but clothed upon," in such bodily condition, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life," *i. e.*, immortal, eternal, divine life. Surely value could not be attributed to anything more impressively than such passages do ascribe value to our coming bodily salvation. No wonder the Apostle John exclaims: "He that hath this hope in Him," *i. e.*, the coming Christ, "purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

2. The first-fruits of this bodily salvation. Returning to 2 Cor. v. 1-4, let us notice the next verse, which reads: "Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," *i. e.*, this glorification of our bodies with immortal life, "is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." That is, the earnest of immortality is given to us now, and that "of" or through the Spirit in His relation to our bodies. Read also again Rom. viii. 23: "And not only they, but ourselves also, *which have the first-fruits of the Spirit,*" etc. Clearly this means some sort of antecedent instalment of our bodily redemption. An earnest is a fractional bestowment in the same kind of that which is fully bestowed at last. Clearly these Scriptures mean, then, that God gives by the Spirit in advance, in the present time, a fractional instalment of that divine life which is to be fully bestowed upon our bodies when Jesus comes. What is this earnest or first-fruits? Rom. viii. 11 clearly answers the question: "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken*

your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is clearly a working of the divine Spirit in our present mortal flesh, and not His resurrection of our dead bodies. There is a whole section of the gospel involved in this office of the indwelling Spirit in relation to our bodies while in this life. Some of God's people are grandly proving this ministry of the Spirit in supernatural healing and invigorating and sustaining of the mortal body. It can be considered nothing short of lamentable loss for the church to be living so largely without this part of "the faith once delivered to the saints." It does not take much of the experience of the Spirit's supernatural work in our bodies to create a definite appreciation of coming immortality and an intense longing for it. Truly it is the tasting of "the powers of the world to come" (Heb. vi. 5). Oh, that the church at large may soon accept her right to the first-fruits of immortality, which belong to us through the Spirit's dwelling in these mortal bodies as His temple!

3. The bearing of our coming bodily salvation upon the interests of surrounding creation. Many Scriptures describe the marvelous changes to be witnessed in all earthly creation after Christ returns. "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Ps. xcvi. 11-13). "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Ps. lxvii. 6). "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains" (Ps. lxxii. 16). That is, there shall be plentiful crops even to the mountain-tops.

But what does our bodily salvation have to do with this gladdening of all creation, even the very soil and vegetation? Our answer is found in the earlier verses of our passage in Romans, namely, viii. 18-22. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be *revealed in us.*" Here again is our outer glorification. "For the earnest expectation of the creature," the creature-world about us, "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," *i. e.,* the exhibition of God's children in the earth in their appropriate bodily glory. "For the creature was made subject," not so created originally; "to vanity," made perishable and transitory; "not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same," namely, man, creation's lord, in his own fall; "in hope," *i. e.,* this subjection is not beyond remedy, it is with a blessed hope reserved; "because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." That is, the physical liberation of the children of God at Jesus' coming is the harbinger of all creation's liberation. When the saints appear in the earth again with Jesus in their glorified bodies, all surrounding creation will clap its hands over this sample of its own coming liberation; and the millenium will witness a grand earnest of the new earth and heavens in the happier material conditions which are depicted by the passages first quoted. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." We see, then, what our own bodily salvation signifies to all the groaning creation. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." We are touched in our bodies by the indwelling Spirit, we are supernaturally healed, we

are supernaturally invigorated, or sustained; but at the most this is only an earnest, and we are left with sufficient groaning to be touched with a feeling of sympathy for groaning creation, and to be reminded that we cannot be perfected without its implying the restoring and glorifying of creation also.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

IV.

OCCUPY TILL I COME.

We will, first, give attention to a simple exposition of Luke xix. 10-28.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." The olden prophecies of the glory and kingdom of the Messiah were more commonly and clearly discerned by the Jews, than those of His humiliation and sacrifice. So, now that there was wide-spread belief that Jesus was the Messiah, they were looking daily to see Him assume His throne, especially on this occasion, as He was nearing the holy city. Let it be noticed, that Jesus does not correct their idea about such a literal kingdom under His visible headship, but He goes on to correct their idea of its "immediately" appearing.

"He said, therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Did any one in a distant province of the Roman Empire aspire to become ruler of that province, he must journey to the capital, and obtain directly from the hands of the Cæsar the title and commission as such. Under this figure Christ teaches the necessity, as well as the meaning, of His own speedy departure from earth to heaven. But He teaches His return also, without which the object of His going away would remain unfulfilled.

"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."

The number ten is the number of full responsibility. So, here, it is represented that Jesus, upon leaving this world, left His full earthly interest in the charge of the full body of His servants, to be administered after His former manner until the time of His return. Jesus took nothing out of the world, which He brought and administered while here; and whatever He left in hand with the first successors He holds His people responsible for, all the way through until He returns.

"But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." The Jews are represented by the "citizens," and they not only crucified the Lord but also after His ascension flatly refused the gospel as a nation, thus sending the message to heaven that they would not welcome His return.

"And it came to pass, that, when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." Jesus is to return, but at the first privately, as it were. He will call a meeting of His servants of the whole age, calling into His presence in the chambers of our skies both the living and the dead of His saints, that He may go over their accounts of service with them, and make appropriate awards to them in the kingdom about to be set up in the earth.

"Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Nothing about any belongings of the servant, but only those of his lord. Nothing about the servant's abilities, but only of the increment of the pound rightly used. Apply this in a natural way to Christian service in the Spirit.

"And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have

thou authority over ten cities." Nothing is said of the servant's employing anything of his own, but only that little trust from his lord; and all that is commended is, not special ability, but faithfulness. And what a reward! It is a reward of actual works, but a royal reward: for every pound gained, a city to rule. Nothing for the original pound, only for the pounds gained by its use. It is perfectly legitimate, nay, we see no other way of applying the parable, but to suppose that Christ means to give rule in the coming kingdom for lowly service now; to give authority over cities in the millennium for faithfully trading now with spiritual gifts. That is pretty good promotion, from a trader to a ruler, from the agency of a pound to the authority over ten cities.

"And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." This is the Master's present method since leaving the world: to get the same kind of spiritual returns as before, though not by the activity of His own hands, but of ours.

"And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" The solemn thought is herein conveyed, that the Master, when He comes, will require both what He left in our hands and a good increase from the use of it. A mere restoration of even all He left He calls wickedness on the part of a servant.

"And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds." Notice, the Master does not say eleven pounds; He reckons only the pounds earned. "(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)" Their remark calls for explanation of his direction. "For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath" (made increase) "shall be given" (more to increase with); "and from him that hath not" (made increase), "even that he hath" (first received) "shall be taken away from him." What a solemn lesson! If we fail to put to increase what the Master entrusts to us, we shall not only lose reward, but even the original gift itself.

"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." This teaches that besides reward to His saints, Christ will bring destruction to His incorrigible enemies.

"And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem." Thus the Master cut off the mistaken expectations of His followers, and turned them faithfully to the momentous responsibilities which His death and ascension were so soon to impose upon them.

We, therefore, take up now more especially the injunction, "Occupy till I come" (verse 13). It will not be questioned, probably, that, although this is primarily only an injunction of the earthly lord of the parable, yet Jesus obviously introduces it as truly embodying His own will for His servants in this dispensation. It is, therefore, a most pregnant injunction, demanding our careful and candid study and fulfillment.

The parable presents Jesus Christ for the time being only in the light of a nobleman, with the kingdom in distant prospect. His present successors, then, are not to arrogate any ruling function in His room. He will

first begin to rule in the earth when He returns, and then will He give those who have been true to present trust to rule with Him. It is not a kingdom that is left in our charge, but an estate, so to speak, or a business.

The question may be raised as to the confines of this estate, or the territory of this business. While the Master occupied but a small portion of the earth in His personal activity, yet His activities had distinct reference to all mankind, and He distinctly charges His followers to go into all the world. We, therefore, see that the bounds of responsibility are coterminous with the entire earth, the entire race, during each successive generation of the entire dispensation. The church is never to talk of "home work" until she has found her home in all the world. Home work is world-wide work and, that, on the principle of equality.

The parable, however, deals most especially with the material resources which are to be kept in profitable use. The "pounds" must mean the heavenly resources which Jesus brought into the world and used Himself. Indeed the expression, "Thy pound hath gained ten pounds," is significant. What gives the pound this productive power? It is Jesus Christ unseen. It is the name of our Lord, in which all is to be done. His name means his unseen but real presence. His name is as potent as His bodily presence. He *"began* both to do and to teach." His going to the Father was not to be a ceasing, but an increasing of His own activities. Paul says he dare not speak of "any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me—by word and deed." "The Lord working with them."

Then too the object in view determines the means to be employed. The object to be pursued by Christ's servants must be the same as that which He pursued. This is stated in the first verse we quoted: "For the Son

of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

It is very easy, then, to determine what the pounds are, as representing the agencies Jesus regularly employed and still lives to energize, that the lost may be sought and found.

1. Gospel words. Jesus brought into the world the living, saving words of His Father. We know that He did not take them back to heaven, but left them with the disciples. "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them" (John xvii. 8). We also know that He gave commandment, that whatsoever He commanded the apostles they should transmit to succeeding laborers, so that Christ's words of life and salvation should not fail throughout the age. Not that they are to be preserved in the letter merely, but pre-eminently in the power and freshness of the Holy Ghost. Gospel preaching, then, does not have to change with the times or with the fashion of the day. It does not have to be brought "up to date," for it is never out of date. We have not to preach the sermons of Paul or Peter; but the Holy Spirit had nothing for them which is not for us, and He has nothing for us which He did not have for them. There is nothing new in the gospel, and yet there is nothing stale. It did not borrow from the earth to begin with; it has nothing to borrow from the earth now. The purpose of the word at the beginning was the saving of the lost to the uttermost; it has no other purpose now. How many have wrapped up the gospel word in a napkin, buried it in the earth, and gone to speaking something more modern!

2. Gospel works. There is a strange, uniform duality in the way in which the ministry of Christ is over and over summarized, as that of word and deed. The twinship of divine word and divine deed is always in

evidence. It is equally evident that He commissioned His immediate followers to the same twin-ministry. The supernatural in word and work through the channel of the natural and human stamped the Master's whole ministry, and it stamped the apostolic ministry likewise. Remember, it is but the same ministry of Him who is the same "yesterday, and to-day, and forever." His works were as much an evidence that He was a prophet as His words. His works constituted an essential part of His ministry and were not merely signs of his divinity. The two are but the right and the left arms of an unmutilated ministry. Hence He conferred this double ministry upon the apostles; and let it be remembered that Christ commanded for the whole age whatsoever He commanded the apostles. A ministry of word divine to-day without the work divine is a mutilated, a one-armed ministry, only one-half of the ministry of the living, unchanged Christ. He looks upon the sick with the same compassion to-day as then. It belongs to Him to heal them as much to-day as then. The progress of human science and skill, credited even to the utmost possible, has not even crossed the line into the territory of divine healing as the need of fallen man. It belongs to the unchanged object of seeking and saving that which is lost. The word and the work are mutual confirmations. Neither can go far alone. Look back through the chapter from Acts xix. 20 to get the force of the words, "*So* mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

3. Gospel prayers. While Christ's active ministry consisted of words and works, as has been shown, yet behind them both was His prayer ministry. It is evident that He prayed everything through beforehand. That is to say, He transacted His ministry with the Father before He appeared in public to fulfill it. And He did not find it easy to get the time for this

hidden occupation. But He took time from sleep, from meals, from social intercourse, even from the public ministry itself, rather than leave His prayer-work shortened. And surely He left this occupation behind, although He still "ever liveth to make intercession." The example of the early laborers shows that public ministry in word and deed depends upon a prior and finished prayer-work. The tendency, even in ministry of far less pressing character than Christ's or the apostles', is to push prayer aside. But public work not only presses but drives if prayer be neglected. And it does not succeed; it is fruitful only in proportion to the finished work of prayer. One of the most hopeful signs of the present day is the revival of the life and ministry of prayer. It must come to take precedence of all else, not only temporal interests, but even public ministry itself.

4. Gospel sufferings. This passive element of Christ's ministry must not be overlooked. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. He suffered unto tears and groans with the needs of others. He suffered over the prevalent unbelief, hardness of heart, and blindness to the truth. And He left these and other manifold sufferings as a sweet legacy to His followers. He declared that in the world we should have tribulation. We are told that manifold shall be our temptations and trials for righteousness' sake. Listen to Paul: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister" (Col. i. 24, 25). This does not mean that Christ did not complete His own proper sufferings, that some of His own afflictions are still behind. It means purely that like afflictions belong to His servants; and Paul had not yet completed all that was allotted to him to suffer in his flesh for the

sake of Christ's body, the church. And he was rejoicing to suffer on until he should have filled up the allotted cup. So any one who wills to occupy till Christ returns must willingly take this cup of ministry and fill it to the brim. We are still on the wrong side of the matter if we take umbrage at the afflictions of Christ and shrink from them. Of course, we are not to think of sharing in His atoning sacrifice. Yet we are to have share with Him in the sacrificial spirit.

5. Gospel poverty. Nothing was more marked in Christ's ministry than His earthly poverty. But that was only a reflex of His poverty of spirit. Now, did He take His poverty from this earth, while leaving His words, His works, His prayers and His sufferings behind for His servants to occupy till He returned? No! True, we do not see gospel laborers very earnestly occupying His poverty, whether in the outward or in the inward respect. But we see similar shortcoming in the other respects mentioned. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). Does this mean that we are freed from poverty through His self-impoverishment on our behalf? Surely not! Rather does it mean that He became poor on our behalf, in order that we might find our wealth in the fellowship of His poverty. "See that ye abound in this grace also." It is not a question, first, of our forsaking all earthly possessions, least of all doing so grudgingly. But it is an essential part of our occupying His room till He returns, that we gladly espouse His self-impoverishing spirit. This will make it easy and delightful to obey the Spirit of Jesus in whatever way He may lead in actually spending and being spent. He will without doubt lead such as are "separated unto the gospel" as ministers to disdain money-getting, to

love hardship, to find it more blessed to give than to receive, to avoid making the gospel a charge financially, to sell all they have and give to the poor, in order to follow Christ more freely and perfectly. But others will feel that their possessions are only a trust and a stewardship, to be administered on the principles of "equality" (2 Cor. viii. 14), of "the love of God" (1 John iii. 17), and of "laying up in store against the time to come" (1 Ti. vi. 19).

Is all this fanciful? We think not. Is it any strain upon the Master's words, "Occupy till I come," when read in the light of the parable? Has anything more been portrayed than one would be glad to have his Master find him doing when He comes?

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

V. THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IN PARABLE.

Prov. xxxi. 10-31.

We need not stop to cite Scriptures to justify us in the use of the expression, "The Bride of Christ," in relation to the Church. It remains only to be said, that almost every divine truth has its very special Scriptural passage, which may be considered to be its comprehensive revelation. And an examination is invited of the passage cited above, as being just such a passage relating to the subject of Christ's Bride. We will need to approach the matter, however, by a preliminary examination of the book of Proverbs in general, to get its keys in our hands.

The book is composite, embracing five minor books or collections. Three of them are from the hand of King Solomon, the other two from other hands, but all from the one inspiring Spirit. The divisions of the whole book are, then, as follows: I., Chapters i.-ix.; II., Chapters x.-xxiv.; III., Chapters xxv.-xxix.; IV., Chapter xxx.; V., Chapter xxxi. These different collections differ in structure somewhat. The first collection is in distinct paragraphs, which are considerably extended discussions of profound themes in a proverbial and parabolical method of discourse. The second section is almost entirely a collection of proverbs in mere sentences, following one another apparently with but little, if any, logical connection. The third section is a mixture of both methods, as is also the fourth section. The last section is very peculiar in structure, as we shall notice later; but it will not be understood, if we divorce it from the book in general by overlooking its parabolical character.

Now, the proverb is a brief, but profound utterance, couched in hidden terms, while really intended to enlighten the earnest inquirer. It may also be said to be a short parable, concealing in measure what it intends to reveal. Its intended meaning does not lie right upon the surface, but requires interpretation. This fact necessitates both an interpreter, on the one hand, and an inquiring and teachable mind, on the other hand; while "to them that are without," who stand aloof from the interpreter in an indifference as to the hidden meaning of the proverb or parable, the vital meaning is never disclosed. This book of Proverbs, then, corresponds in the Old Testament to the Parables of our Lord in the New Testament. "To them that are without" the book will remain a mere collection of natural moral maxims, and so a book of inferior value and worthiness in the canon of Scripture. But its having a place in that canon justifies us in expecting wonderful spiritual disclosures, which only the divine Interpreter can give us, and that only as we come into the "secret place" with Him.

The introduction to this book (i. 1-6) plainly states its object. Taking this object on a spiritual plane, it is evident that here is a book of Scripture not one whit behind in importance and value for the children of God. "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtility to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels; to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings." The aim of the book, then, pertains to spiritual instruction, understanding, and guidance in the paths of godly life in an ungodly world. The

promise to the right kind of a learner is threefold, "to know," "to perceive," and "to receive." That is, "to know" by learning the doctrine, "to perceive" with inward understanding of heart through the Holy Spirit, and "to receive" into living experience and practice. In this connection a special relation between the Proverbs and the Psalms, which immediately precede, may be marked. The Psalms point us Godward and heavenward, while the Proverbs direct us aright manward and earthward. Just as the New Testament epistles so often portray to us, first, our gift of life hidden with Christ in God and, then, the proper expression of that life in a godly walk before our fellowmen.

The introduction also indicates that the book is adapted to four classes of persons, "the simple," "the young man," "the wise man," and the "man of understanding." The "simple" may be said to be the new convert, the "babe in Christ," who is called to learn in a docile spirit the first steps of the spiritual way. The "young man" may be said to be the more advanced Christian, who is consecrated, zealous for life and service in Christ, but needing to be tempered with further knowledge and with discretion. The "wise man" may be said to be the Christian, who has become even, mellow, and pliable in God's hands under all circumstances. But there is a higher class still, the "man of understanding," who has become qualified for counsel, apt to teach, able to reprove in the spirit of meekness; a man not so conspicuous in many ways as once, but the man prepared of God for occasions of crisis, a spiritual Washington or Lincoln.

Another key to the book may be found in taking the frequent expression, "My Son," to refer primarily to Jesus in His human life on earth from childhood onward. We are, then, invited to take for ourselves

the same book which was His guide in holy living before an ungodly world. And as children of God through Him we would come under the same gracious paternal address, and be guided by this book in the same footsteps of wisdom which He trod.

Yet another key may be this, that, as Jesus Christ has been made "of God unto us wisdom," so He is to be seen and heard here in the personified "Wisdom," which is so characteristic of this book. A new reading of the passages in question with this key will render them very attractive and profitable, e. g., i. 20-33, iii. 13-20, viii. 1-36. Substitute everywhere the word "Jesus" for "wisdom."

Now again, this personified wisdom is largely presented in the feminine form, and in antithesis thereto appears frequently the "strange woman." The literal and direct warnings against defiling and destroying social relations are not to be modified, but those warnings at the same time no doubt have a deeper import of a spiritual character. The strange woman is the seducing spirit of Satan in contrast with the Holy Spirit of Jesus, implied in the woman of wisdom. Any kind of yielding to the seductions of this world, which lieth in the evil one, is called in Scripture spiritual adultery on the part of Christ's follower. We have in these warnings of Proverbs, then, a parabolic form of the familiar spiritual admonition: "Love not the world, neither the things of the world," etc. The world, the flesh, and the devil constitute a betraying, seducing, destroying trinity, which plies manifold allurements even as a bewitching woman of the streets, or a beautiful, but faithless wife. The spirit of Satan, which animates this world, makes a soul, or a body of persons, even a church so-called, to be spiritually unchaste and unfaithful. But the Spirit of Christ makes a pure and faithful soul or church. The former may be identified

with the mystical "harlot" of the book of Revelation, while the latter answers to the mystical "Lamb's Wife" of the same Scripture. So that it becomes very natural for us to find in the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs xxxi., the contrast to the "strange woman" of previous chapters, and a parable of the "Bride of Christ."

A few more words may further justify this interpretation of the closing section of this wonderful book. We have already seen that this book presents primarily the molding principles of the earthly career of Jesus Himself, and, by application, the principles of an earthly life on our part in His Spirit and in His foot-steps. When, now, we come to the final chapter of this book of proverb and parable, shall we not expect the interpreting Spirit to reveal something divine under the portrayals of the ideal king and the "virtuous," or ideal woman, who alone is fit for such a king? And what interpretation can be found in keeping with the Christly sense we have already found in the book thus far, but that at the last we have the character of the Coming King and of His Spouse depicted? It should not stumble us that the wife is portrayed more at large than the King. It is even so in Rev. 19, where the "Lamb's Wife" is introduced. No mean place is given throughout Scripture to the description of the Church, which Christ has been preparing through the ages to be joined to Himself forever at His coming. Here in Prov. 31 she is described parabolically in the manifold virtues, in which He Himself has clothed her, and in which He is to present her to Himself with exceeding joy. These virtues are acquired now, but will have their fullest and most fruitful exercise when employed with Christ in the kingdom which He is to bring into this earth.

We will now give suggestive interpretations of the details of this parabolic picture of the true Bride, the

Church, as the prospective wife of the Lamb of God when He comes in the kingdom. Of course the interpretation here must be held very flexibly. We are entering into a "secret inner chamber," where the "Blessed Bridegroom" whispers to us each according as we are able to hear. It would not do to restrict the interpretation as we might in a passage of plain language capable of strict exegesis.

Verse 10. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." "Who can find?" It is not only who, but where. We may conceive of Michael or Gabriel going forth, like Eliezer of old, only among the shining hosts of the uppermost heavens, for a wife for the eternal Son of God. But we are sure he would not have been like Eliezer successful in his search. The Father's Son has to search for His bride Himself. And, behold! He makes His search not where highest archangel would have turned. The Son of God comes down among men, where "there is none righteous, no, not one." Surely, Christ only could have found His bride among fallen and sinful men. Oh, what a lover is He, going forth to seek His spouse, not among the morally attractive, but among the morally needy. "Let me find the one, whom no one else desires," He seems to say: "Let Me bring to My abode of ineffable light one who otherwise would have forever to dwell in outer and unspeakable darkness. Let Me make the partner of My holy and unblemished life one who otherwise would lie eternally in reeking corruption."

"Her price." Yes, she has a price, without which she cannot be had; not a price, however, according to beauty, but according to her desert of hell. Who but the Lamb of God could have ever paid the price of redemption for this sin-captive? Surely, "the precious blood of Christ" is "far above rubies." And what He

has paid for her is the measure of her value to Him to all eternity. We need not fear that any creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, for no creature can ever recompense Christ for what He has paid for her.

As she is made His by grace, so also is she made fit for partnership with Him in His glory by His grace. And the manifold gracious virtues to be found in her are now presented.

1. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil"—vs. 11. This corresponds to "that faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season" (Matt. xxiv. 45). Again, Jesus describes Himself in Matt. xxv. 14 as "a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." He also has left the charge: "Occupy till I come." "Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," says Paul. "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." It is this TRUSTWORTHINESS that is presented as the leading virtue of Christ's Bride, so that He receives at His coming again His "own with usury," and has "no need of spoil," that is, of going off on the chase after precarious supplies.

2. "She will do him good and not evil all the days her life"—vs. 12. Love is here the secret. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Love of her Lord will constrain the true Church to do all things for His pleasure and gain. This is the very root of true consecration, a devotion in love not to comforts and blessings from Christ, but to the fulfilling of His pleasure. A wife's real love and devotion are not shown by what she tries to get from her husband but by what she tries to be to him. This "virtuous woman" is truly

DEVOTED, a marked characteristic of the Bride of Christ.

3. "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands"—vs. 13. This is the "Go" that Christ puts into a truly sanctified heart. "My son, go, work to-day in my vineyard." "Redeeming the time." "Willingly." "The Lord loveth a cheerful" worker. "Let all your things be done with love," which is "willingly." "With her hands." This is indeed "personal work," and it is not the other person either, but doing oneself what one finds to do. The Bride of Christ is HEARTY in service.

4. "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar"—vs. 14. Her food is "that meat which cometh down from heaven." She seeks "those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." She is therefore HEAVENLY in mind and character. "The law of the Lord is his delight, and in His law doth he meditate day and night" may be said of the true member of Christ's bridal company.

5. "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens"—vs. 15. This may be taken to imply a timeliness in prayer and the ministry of the Word, whereby the Lord's people are kept well nourished unto all good works. How well it is illustrated in Jesus' rising a great while before it was day, that all the day's opportunity might be met with heaven's supply. Or, like the apostles' saying, "We will give ourselves continually unto prayer and the ministry of the Word." It may be likened to the "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." So we may call this the Bride's virtue of HOLY READINESS.

6. "She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard"—vs. 16. It is very easy to see under this language a blessed

home mission spirit and activity. It is pushing into "the regions beyond." It is EVANGELISTIC energy, converting the gains of past service into the means and ability of new endeavor, instead of resting upon past service.

7. "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms"—vs. 17. We here see one increasing in vigor with age and labor, and we are reminded of the injunctions: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" "increasing in the knowledge of God;" "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee." "They go from strength to strength." So another characteristic grace of the Bride is that of GROWING up in Christ.

8. "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night"—vs. 18. What is the use of setting a watch where there is nothing of value to be guarded? So the Bride of Christ appreciates the charge to be sober and vigilant against the stealthy, thieving devil, because she finds she has something worth guarding, too precious to lose. She is WATCHFUL over Christ's treasure which she has in her keeping.

9. "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff"—vs. 19. This may indicate the Bride's LOWLINESS in labor, diligent in any business appointed in God's providence. Too many sit about waiting for "something to turn up" for them to do, instead of doing what their hand finds present. It is not necessary to have a pulpit, or a Mission, or a foreign call. "They went everywhere preaching the word," in the kitchen, in the field, in the shop, by the way, "everywhere," for "everywhere" souls are to be found.

10. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea,

she reacheth forth her hands to the needy"—vs. 20. She is compassionate and benevolent. Instead of dreading beggars and seeking to escape the cries of need she seeks them out and holds forth an inviting, full hand. But with the bride this cannot be limited to temporal things, but must include preeminently the spiritual also. Jesus went out among those that were needy, temporally, physically, and spiritually, and He let their wants call forth His liveliest compassions and His unremitting ministries. So with His people, when truly one with Him, active BENEVOLENCE will not fail to be a prominent bridal mark.

11. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet" —vs. 21. Self-confidence, self-readiness, self-security are marks of the flesh. But timorousness, apprehensiveness, anxiety and carking care are not marks of the bride-spirit. The Bride knows "the secret place of the most High," and knows God as a "refuge and strength," and she says: "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed," etc. She is not afraid of the "devices" of Satan. She does not spread alarm among God's people, but gives assurances of the ample provisions of grace. FEARLESS is this Bride of the Lamb.

12. "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple"—vs. 22. Beautiful parable of the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, of those lovely garments of Christly habit, "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering," the practices which beautify the "elect of God, holy and beloved." Not in vain is the prayer: "Let the BEAUTY of the Lord our God be upon us." This virtue marks the Bride of Christ.

13. "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land"—vs. 23. Christ

has honor among men through His faithful Bride. Instead of His name being degraded and blasphemed it is exalted in the earth. Even as a faithless, or shiftless wife will drive an honorable husband to disgrace, so Christ can be betrayed in the house of His friends. Oh, that we may be CREDITABLE to Christ! If we present Him with honor among men, He will present us in honor among angels and before the Father.

14. "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant"—vs. 24. This may without straining be referred to the foreign missionary spirit and efficiency of the Bride. The linen typifies righteousness, and the girdle love and peace, the blessings which are given to us to spread abroad throughout the earth by the gospel. This world-wide MISSIONARY trait, which never talks of "staying at home" until the Church has found its home in all the earth, is a necessary mark of the Bride.

15. "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come"—vs. 25. These present days are proving that the Bride's HOPE is more than that of finally being saved, or of going to heaven at death. The "time to come," which gives her rejoicing, is the time of her Lord's return to the earth to be crowned in honor in the city where He was crowned in shame. This hope is her clothing of "strength and honor."

16. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness"—vs. 26. There is nothing by which we prove whether our wisdom is from beneath or from above so much as by the mouth and tongue. Let us never be content to profess full attainment of the bride-spirit and character until our "words be always with grace, seasoned with salt," "that which is good to the use of EDIFYING, that it may minister grace to the hearers." This is to be true

not only of public teaching but of daily converse in private.

17. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness"—vs. 27. The Epistles of Timothy and Titus show how VIGILANT the Spirit of Christ will make us in watch-care over others in so far as we are made our "brother's keeper." It is not the hireling spirit, but that of the "Good Shepherd." Until "the chief Sheperd" reappears, the blessed office of feeding His sheep and His lambs calls out the very best traits of the true Bride of Christ.

18. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her"—vs. 28. Perhaps no trait is more characteristic of the well-ripened bride-spirit than that of the MOTHERHOOD of souls, not merely initiating them into salvation, but bringing them on into full manhood in Christ. Paul says in 1 Cor. iv. 15: "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers." It is comparatively easy to become a tutor in the family of God on earth, but alas, for a family without father or mother.

19. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all"—vs. 29. We may conceive that orders of angelic beings are signified under the words "many daughters." And the wonderful truth comes forth that fallen man by grace is made more excellent in character and office than angels. The Bride in the likeness and royal fellowship of Christ is SUPERANGELIC.

20. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised"—vs. 30. Just as on the natural plane, mere superficial charm of face and form is not the true worth and attractiveness of a wife, so on this spiritual plane the true charm of the Bride, that makes her PRAISEWORTHY in the eyes of God, is her moral beauty and worth in

Christlikeness, not the false charm of a worldly, æsthetic grace.

21. "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates"—vs. 31. This may well represent the Bride's REWARD at the coming of Christ, when He shall say: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," sharing the glory and the kingdom with Him in the earth where she has suffered with Him. Fitting close to this parable of the King and His Bride.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

VI.

CHRIST'S CONQUEST OF THE SKY.

It is very important to understand that Christ's return is in two stages. He is not to come visibly upon the earth at once, but is to come first into the sky and there abide unseen for some time before descending in visible person. We will at this point consider at some length His victorious entrance into our earthly heaven.

We will, first, need to notice the sense in which the word "heaven" is commonly employed in the Bible. Much of scriptural understanding may be lost for the want of discrimination here.

Scripture reveals that there is a series of heavens. From our earthly standpoint, these heavens reach up from earth's immediate heaven, the sky or skies, to "heaven itself," the supreme place of God's manifested presence and glory, where Jesus Christ has for us entered. A succession, or gradation, of heavens is clearly implied in a passage like 2 Cor. xii. 2: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." This passage pictures an ascending series of heavens up to the third, whither one may while yet mortal be transported, either in literal personal ascent out of the body, or in a transport of spiritual experience while in the body but oblivious to it. Again, Heb. iv. 14: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens," etc. Here a plurality of heavens is recognized as constituting an immeasurable space beyond up to the Father's abode. Heb. vii. 26: "For such an High

Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Here vast ascent above a plurality of heavens is indicated. Heb. ix. 24: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Far away above us, then, is a literal place of the very central presence of God, which is called "heaven itself"; all other heavens are only of comparative significance. Our Saviour is, then, at present in the heaven called "heaven itself"; but He is waiting to "descend from heaven" into another heaven, our terrestrial heaven, the lowest and farthest away from the zenith-heaven, so far as we can judge.

Now, the Scriptures most frequently use the term "heaven" for this lowest of all the heavens, the one ensphering our globe. It can perhaps be truthfully said, that, excepting the connection or some qualifying expression indicates otherwise, the word is everywhere to be taken in this sense. With this key in hand the Bible will wonderfully open to our minds in respect to celestial localities.

Accordingly, Gen. i. 1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," opens the book of revelation with a statement of the creation of the dual sphere, the terrestrial and its celestial; or that province of God's universe, which is under immediate survey throughout the Bible as the theater of the redemption which is the subject of the whole Bible. This "heaven" is the same as "the air," in Eph ii. 2, 1 Thess. iv. 17, and the "high places," in Eph. vi. 12, or as we say "the sky" or "the skies." We need not attempt to measure the height or the expanse of this heaven. It may consist of our solar sphere or reach far beyond, or lie much nearer. It is not improbably of vast ex-

tent. But larger or smaller, it is the complement of the earth, its twin-sister, its other self. They twain are one from the beginning and shall be one unto everlasting generations.

As has been said, this heaven and earth constitute one system or principality of God's universe, namely, that upon which revelation and redemption are focused. This province was given by God into the charge of one of His highest, brightest and most powerful creatures. The latter, however, conceived selfish ambition, revolted from God and became His adversary, the devil that he is, and Satan. He has thus far been permitted to remain seated over this wondrous province of heaven and earth, and fatally to affect the interests and welfare of earth and sky. He is doomed, however, to overthrow and everlasting expulsion from his dominion. This is the governmental part of the redemption of the Lamb of God, which begins openly to be wrought at the latter's second coming. Satan's dominion is centered and seated in this mundane heaven. When Jesus Christ rises to begin Satan's overthrow and expulsion, He will begin His conquest in the sky-center and seat of Satan's empire. Hence the first stage of Christ's return is His coming into the sky, partly to clear the celestial regions of the adversary and all his power. This will crowd him into the little stronghold of the earth, whither the Lord will, in the second stage of His coming, follow him to drive him out into the bottomless pit. Magnificent passages of Scripture relate to this conquest of the celestial part of Satan's dominion, to which we will now give our attention. Let us distinctly understand that we are simply looking up through the telescope of Scripture into this azure depth above us, our own earthly heaven.

I. Daniel vii. 9, 10, 13, 14: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose

garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Here is, first, the overthrow of thrones; of course, they are hostile thrones. It is all clearly a celestial scene. These hostile thrones can be none other than the supreme seat of Satan in the sky with the subordinate thrones of His vassals, the principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in the celestial heights above us (Eph. vi. 12).

Next, the Ancient of days is represented as taking His seat, i. e., as taking some throne not previously occupied by Him. The connection makes it practically certain that He takes the occupancy of the capital-seat from which the hostile power has just been ejected. The Ancient of days clearly means the Almighty Father, and the glory of His person, the splendor attending Him, and the myriads of heavenly beings ministering unto Him are described. Finally, the time is indicated as one of supreme judgment.

The next addition to the scene is the escorting of the Son of man in glory-clouds into the midst as the central figure in this august scene. To Him is now formally committed the dominion of the whole world,

and that an endless dominion. Remembering the offer that Satan made to Jesus on the mount of temptation, we can readily see what this investment of the Son of man with all earthly dominion signifies. He is rewarded for His waiting to receive the kingdom from sacred and supreme hands, and that after redeeming the same with His precious blood.

Now how differently all this reads to us when we look upon it as an actual drama to occur soon in the very sky overhead! There God Almighty is to manifest His presence and sovereignty where Satan's capital now is; and there our blessed Lord is to be formally invested with world-wide and everlasting authority to unite earth with heaven under divine sovereignty and blessing.

II. Rev. iv. and v. This seems unquestionably to be the same scene and event only more fully depicted. The passage is too long to quote, and the reader is asked to turn to it and follow our thought from the chapters themselves.

"A door was opened in heaven." Heaven means our earthly heaven. Revelation is transformed and at once opened to us in a most vivid and interesting manner as soon as we notice what is meant by the oft-repeated word "heaven," namely, earth's celestial counterpart. It is there that these wonderful scenes are soon to occur. "A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." Here is the same enthronement of God Almighty in our heaven, only no reference is here made to the overthrow of previous occupants. The same attendance of myriads of angels is noted (v. 11): "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." The Son of man is introduced "in the midst of the throne" as being given the book

of judgment to execute its decrees with reference to the earth (v. 6, 7).

But this passage introduces in addition to the picture in Daniel the company of the redeemed from the earth. In chapter iv. 6-11 it is the representatives of the saved, the "four beasts" and "the four and twenty elders," who render homage to the Almighty, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come; Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are," in existence, "and were created." In chapter v. 8-14, we have the universal orchestra worshiping and praising the Lamb "in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders." Note the concentric circles. The Father, and the Lamb standing before Him, and the seven Spirits of God, all constitute the divine trinitarian center. Immediately encircling or overshadowing are the four cherubic "beasts," or living creatures, and the twenty-four elders on encircling thrones. Surrounding them are gathered those whom the cherubim and the elders lead in the anthem of praise to the Lamb: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." Surrounding this vast host of the redeemed is that company of millions and hundreds of millions of angels, who echo back in antiphony, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Then the anthem is caught up from the outmost boundaries of "heaven, earth, under the earth, and in the sea," by "all that are in them," saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and

power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." As the echo returns, "the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever."

III. Rev. xii. 7-12. What has now been said will give us ready comprehension of this passage. It is the same great event, at least in part, namely, the special part relating to Satan's overthrow in the sky. Here we see for a fact the actual conflict involved in turning Satan out of his celestial headquarters, where for so long he has had magnificent court, absolute power of supernal order, the authority and means of influence whereby to exercise malignant sway over earthly beings and interests. We see his coming debasement from his celestial capital to his former earthly footstool. We see the coming into the sky-regions of the blessed kingdom of God and His Christ.

"And there was war in heaven." The tense is past as to the vision, but not as to actual history. We know now what place is meant here by "heaven." "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." We see, then, that deliverance, or "salvation" has first to be brought before the descending Christ into the celestial part of this world. This is true strategy. A competent conqueror will make straight for his enemy's capital and drive him out, then hunt him from the outer parts of his domin-

ion. "Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them," namely, those faithful angels, which have been obliged to suffer and contend as aliens in Satan's celestial territory, just as God's children have to suffer and contend in his earthly territory. What rejoicing the angels will have when Satan's presence and power cease to darken the skies! Could we now look up into these skies with spirit-sight, we would not see the heavenly purity and peace, of which the azure presents to our natural sight a beautiful symbol. But hearken! "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." "A short time," to fortify himself against the pursuing Lamb, to hold mankind under power, to finish his purposes of destruction, to gather souls with him into the pit, to defeat, if possible, the enthronement of Christ on earth.

IV. Rev. xi. 15-17. Here the inauguration of the kingdom of God and of His Christ in Satan's former dominion in the sky is clearly presented, and this passage is undoubtedly parallel to the previous passages. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned," i. e., hast begun to reign.

With verse 18 we have features added to what we have had already as belonging to this momentous epoch of the conquest of the sky. "And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come," i. e., the time

of commotion and tribulation among the earthly nations. "And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great." This introduces the resurrection of the saints and the gathering of them with the living saints to the presence of their Head in the sky, for judgment upon their works of service and for the appointing of their rewards in the earthly kingdom with Christ when He descends. "And shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." This includes widespread obliteration from the earth of destructive forces amassed and inflamed by Satan under the Antichrist. Finally, as we have from the beginning seen that Christ's coming into the sky includes the manifestation of the trinity in our heaven in fullest glory and power, so now verse 19 adds other wonderful divine institutions to be introduced into our earthly heaven at this same time: "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."

What an awe-inspiring vision has now been given to us by these few passages from God's Word! They fit together perfectly, each supplying some essential portion, but all evidently centering upon the same great event of the deliverance of our heaven from Satan's ancient and appalling kingdom of darkness, and of the introduction and establishment in place thereof of the glorious kingdom of God and His Christ, with throne, temple, and ark. With entirely new mental sight do we look up into our starry sky, and cry:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

VII.

THE TRIBULATION.

While nothing is more common in this world, especially in the lot of the children of God, than tribulation, yet the Bible teems with references to a momentous epoch in the world's history so pre-eminent in woe as to be worthy of this exclusive designation, the tribulation, as if all others faded from sight before it.

A few passages may be cited to show that there is such a time coming, and that this period of earthly trouble towers immeasurably above all others. Mark xiii. 19, "In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." Matt. xxiv. 21, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Dan. xii. 1, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Joel ii. 1, 2, "The day of the Lord cometh, for it is at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess," etc.; "there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." Jer. xxx. 7, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it."

Now, all of these passages must signify one and the same epoch, because each describes it as unparalleled, entirely unique for terribleness. There are very, very many more passages that might be brought forward, which most evidently depict that same awful time. And everywhere there is something in the immediate statement, or in the context, to point to certain last

days for this tribulation. But we have already had intimations of this time in the last two passages cited in our previous chapter: Rev. xi. 18, "And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come;" Rev. xii. 12, "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." This shows conclusively when the tribulation is to occur, and from what sources it is to come. It occurs between the two stages of Christ's return, or while He remains in the airy regions from which Satan shall have been cast out. And the source of the tribulation is Satan, on the one hand, in his wrath at being ejected from his sky-capital into the earth, having but a short time allowed for him to remain even in that corner of his former empire, and Christ, on the other hand, in His visitation of the wrath upon impenitent mankind, which has been so long and faithfully threatened.

Accordingly, the book of Revelation goes right on, after describing the expulsion of Satan from heaven, to describe the tribulation produced under the twofold operation of the wrath of Satan and the wrath of the Lamb. Read for the former aspect Rev. xii. 13-xiii. 18, and for the latter aspect Rev. xiv. 9-xviii. 24.

We will now trace two main lines of events leading up to the development of the tribulation.

The first main line leading up to the outburst of the tribulation is the departure of the church from the earth to meet with Christ Jesus in the sky. Now, so long as the church is in the earth, Satan cannot vent his wrath in the degree and in the open way in which he will in the tribulation, and Christ will not execute His terrible wrath.

Christ will not pour out the wrath of God upon the earth over the head of His church. This is not to say that individuals of the church, or that even the great

bulk of the nominal church, will not pass under the tribulation, but the outbreak of the tribulation must await the translation of the church spiritual as recognized by Christ, the "little flock" to whom the kingdom is promised. Whatever is left behind is not to be called the church, or a portion of the church, in the dispensational sense, for the church as such will give place to Israel again as the witness for God in the earth. No one or more passages can be adduced, perhaps, which state this fact in so many words; but many passages seem so clearly to imply it that we can scarcely question it. Rev. v. 9, 10: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." We see here the universal church happily seated in the heavenlies with Christ before the events of the tribulation are touched upon. This is just in accordance with Luke xxi. 36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The things referred to are those of "that day" which shall come as "a snare—on all them that dwell on the face of the earth." 1 Thess. i. 10, "To wait for His Son from heaven—even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. v. 4, 9, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Matt. iii. 12, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matt. xiii. 30, "Let both grow together until the har-

vest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Is. xxvi. 20, 21, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." Old Testament types are very strong. Gen. vii. 1, 4, "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;—For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth," etc. The angel of destruction, before smiting Sodom, said to Lot, Gen. xix. 22, "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." Again, at the time of the destruction of the first born of all Egypt, the children of Israel were forewarned to secrete themselves in their habitations behind the blood of the passover. And it is credibly reported that not a believer was left in Jerusalem, when it fell under Titus, in 70 A. D., but all had escaped from the doomed city in due season through heeding Christ's warnings.

But not only will not Christ visit the wrath of God upon the world, without first bringing His church into the pavilion of the sky with Himself, but Satan cannot come forth in his wrath and open workings so long as the church remains here. This is due to the fact that the church, through the name of her Lord and the power of His Spirit, has supremacy over Satan and all His hosts. This truth is too plain to be questioned; but it will be profitable to bring it out to some extent.

The key to the whole matter is the words of Jesus in Matt. xvi. 18, 19: "Upon this rock I will build my church; *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth

shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." No such power is ever given to any earthly body but the church; and we will see later that there is no such overpowering restraint upon the gates of hell during the tribulation. Luke x. 17-19: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Here Christ expands the thought of this power which His disciples found over Satan through His name, by divulging to them what He had already seen in vision, namely, the coming dethronement of Satan from the skies, which we have just been considering in the last chapter. The Master then continues to explain to them the present power of His followers over Satan: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, *and over all the power of the enemy.*" Eph. vi. 12, 13: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all," *i. e.,* having overcome all these foes, having done all of them up, "to stand," *i. e.,* to remain in full command of the field of battle. This indicates the supremacy which the church has over Satan in the world to this present time, and so long as she remains. All her members are not taking the full victory. We may be often confused in mind over apparent defeats of our faith. But actual victories prove that we have the power of unfailing victory. And, as we shall more fully show a little later, as long as our enemy hides in the bush and works by wiles, instead of open conflict, he confesses that we have power over all his power.

Even in death, "we are more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ." The fact of death and the mouldering of our bodies in the grave is no proof of Satan's victory at last. Said a dying saint: "The nearer death comes, the less I see of it, and the more of glory." In spite of Satan the believer is to adopt the language of Paul (Phil. i. 20), "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For—to depart, and to be with Christ—is far better." Death is "sleep" to the body and "gain" to the spirit. It is only apart from Christ that a person falls before Satan's power in death and in the intermediate state.

And when we come to the resurrection of Christ's dead, the change of living believers from mortality to immortality, and the translation of them all in chariots of glory, perhaps meeting Satan in mid-air in his lightning-like fall from the sky, the triumph of the "little flock" over the devil is complete. And the supremacy of the church over Satan's power is brought to its climax in the fact that, so long as the church remains on earth, the devil cannot put forth his own great executive of the tribulation, the Antichrist. This will be elucidated under the next division of this chapter.

The second main line leading to the outburst of the tribulation is the rise and reign of the Antichrist.

We cannot have the tribulation without the Antichrist, for he is Satan's full embodiment of power in carrying on the tribulation from his side. But the Antichrist cannot appear against the power of the church on earth. This fact is conceded in what has already been shown. But there is a special proof-passage which will now be considered.

2 Thess ii. 1-12: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We have here a vivid picture of the Antichrist. Just as there are tribulations and the tribulation, so there are antichrists and the Antichrist. See 1 John ii. 18. And there is the "spirit of antichrist" (1 John iv. 3). Institutions, hierarchies, movements, literature, may breathe the spirit of antichrist. Personal antichrists have been rising up all through the dispensation. But our present passage, and many others, teach

the final appearance of one who in person and spirit so crowns this line of things, that he is called the Antichrist, as exclusively as if none other had preceded him. All others are but weak foreshadowings of him. And our passage clearly shows that, while the iniquity of the very Antichrist has been at work all through the dispensation, yet it has had to keep concealed, a "mystery," a secreted operation, because of a restraining power in the earth; but when that that lets, *i. e.*, hinders Satan from fully exposing himself and his doings in a visible head, shall be taken out of the way, "that Wicked," that "man of sin," the "son of perdition," clearly none other than the Antichrist himself, shall be revealed, only to be consumed, after a brief reign, by the power of the descending Christ. Much perplexity has existed, and much debate has been indulged in, over "what withholdeth." But there is no explanation needed further than that it is the church, which alone holds this hindering power through the Holy Spirit to the end of her appointed time below. There is no opposition to this explanation from the fact that the hinderer is spoken of by the personal pronoun; for the translation might justly be he, she, or it. Then the church is the body of Christ, and the hinderer is really Christ in the church. The idea that it is the Holy Spirit that prevents is likewise true; it is His power in her. But it is a mistake to think of the Holy Spirit being taken out of the way personally from the earth. He who hovered over chaos will never withdraw from the earth; and His glorious workings will characterize the tribulation. But He will not during that time be having the church here as His overpowering agency in opposition to Satan, but will give room to the hour and power of darkness.

In verse 4 the Antichrist is described in his utterly sacrilegious and impious character, opposing all di-

vinity and worship, and exacting all adoration for himself. He will even invade the temple itself which the Jews will build at Jerusalem again before Christ returns upon the earth, and there seat himself in exhibition of himself as very God. Verses 9, 10 show that he will work openly with full satanic power, with signs, false miracles and deceptions, in comparison with which everything thus far displayed in the dark and occult arts will prove to be but child's play. This will make quick work of destruction with the souls of them that perish for hatred of saving truth in Jesus Christ.

It is easy to trace the features of this same fearful personage in "the beast," of Rev. xiii, the "little horn," of Dan. vii. 19-27, and the "wilful king," of Dan. xi. 36-45. Even if the latter passage refer primarily to some earlier personage, yet it remains as a larger type, for no one has ever yet arisen to come near exhausting the demands of the passage; Antichrist alone will win this distinction. Nebuchadnezzar is a type of Antichrist in Dan. iii, where he makes an image of himself large enough to be visible to the masses of people assembled and demands worship for himself under their worship of this image. So Antichrist will have his image, Rev. xiii. 14; only this latter image is miraculously given the breath of life and actual speech, so that the penalty of death for failure to worship the image might more impressively be enforced.

A whole chapter might justly be written upon the features of the tribulation produced by the dominion of the Antichrist. He not only will take this place of divinity and require worship at his feet upon penalty of death, but he will also take dominion over all political and commercial interests in the world with the same extreme measures of coercion (Rev. xiii. 16, 17). And he will be permitted to work quite unre-

strainedly: "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. xiii. 7).

But it is easy to see that such conditions will call for extreme visitations of divine wrath from the Lamb in the sky. Many passages of God's Word portray the terrifying impressions upon men produced by the manifestations of Christ's wrath during the tribulation. Is. ii. 10-12, 19: "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low;—And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Rev. vi. 15-16: "And the kings of the earth, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The tribulation, then, is the day both of the unrestrained raging of Satan in the earth and of the unaccustomed wrath of the Lamb of God poured out from the skies. Unto that day the foreordained judgments have been reserved under seals, which none but "the Lion of the tribe of Judah can open" (Rev. v. 1-7). The book of Revelation is largely given to a description of these judgments from the hands of Jesus Christ while tarrying with His church in the sky.

The arena of tribulation will be the earth in general in two-fold division, the impenitent world and Israel. In the tribulation Israel will have a fully renewed nationality, its suspended history will be taken up again as the representative of God in the earth. In general, the nation of Israel will be still impenitent and stiff-necked. But through a godly portion the oracles of God will be preserved and proclaimed, spiritual Israel taking the place vacated by the translation of the spiritual church as the witness of the Lord in the earth. About this appointed standard believers of all nations will array themselves as now they do about the standard of the Christian church. But while the impenitent world in general will be heavily afflicted by the tribulation, the climax of the tribulation is appointed to fall upon impenitent Israel. While much is described in the Bible of the tribulation of faithless nations, and even in some degree some interpreters feel sure that they read specific judgments on specific Gentile nations, yet there is perfect clearness, and much explicitness and fulness, in the descriptions of the awful calamities to befall Israel, descriptions which leave no room for differences of interpretation. While the devil through Antichrist will be permitted to have power "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them," namely, these Hebrew saints and their Gentile associates, as is not now permitted against the church, yet for the sake of these same "elect" ones "those days shall be shortened."

The objects of the tribulation are both destructive and saving. Of course, Satan's work is only destructive in purpose. He will exhaust every available resource to accomplish as much final ruin of men's souls as possible before his expulsion. But the divine work will be both retributive and saving in purpose, the latter outweighing the former. As has already been seen

from quotations given, it will be a time of swift visitation upon the incorrigible sinners, who fall a prey to Satan only because they hate truth and righteousness. But at the same time, outside of such classes, there will be a great ingathering of "tribulation saints." Rev. vii. 1-8 describes the aforementioned election of Israel as the "sealed" "servants of our God." Verses 9-17 describe the souls gathered in out of all nations in that awful period, "These are they which came out of (the) great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (verse 14). It is implied that they came up to the heavenly abodes through direst sorrows, and doubtless through martyrdom, while it is complained that men in general failed to improve the terrors of the tribulation properly by repentance (Rev. ix. 21; xvi. 9-11).

But the most remarkable result of the tribulation from the side of divine wisdom and goodness relates to Israel. The climax of the tribulation falls upon that chosen people and with fearful destruction; yet the end attained thereby is the elimination of proud and incorrigible elements and the preparation of a remnant, a poor and humble people, who shall be led to cry for their Redeemer and Messiah to come, and will welcome Him in the person of "Him whom they pierced." Jesus said that He would forsake wicked Jerusalem until they should welcome Him with the words: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39). And it is plainly foretold by the prophets that this will be brought about as a result of the tribulation. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent. * * * Then will I take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be

haughty because of my holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth" (Zeph. iii. 9, 11-13). "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 8, 9).

For the purpose of visiting this effectual tribulation upon Israel, the nation is to be largely regathered and settled prosperously in their old habitations, while yet, however, in impenitency as a nation. With this Israelitish State Antichrist will sustain covenant relations for a time, instead of holding it subject to him absolutely as other nations. But owing to the refusal, of the nation on the one hand, to accept Antichrist for God, and to the aggressive and powerful spiritual activity of the sealed part of the nation, on the other hand, Antichrist will ultimately assemble his armies from all nations against the land of Israel and the capital city in a determined effort to annihilate them. This is the instrument in the Lord's hand for chastising Israel, of cutting off the proud and incorrigible elements, and of culling out the penitent remnant for His salvation. At the right moment Jesus will descend with the armies of heaven, take this feeble remnant from the lion's mouth, and visit instant and almost complete annihilation upon Antichrist and his host. This momentous overthrow of Antichrist is described in Rev. xix. 11-21, 2 Thess. ii. 8, and many

like Scriptures. The final issue is the immediate coming of the reign of Christ over Israel, their establishment and glorification in their land in all the extent of the Abrahamic promise, and the blessing of the world through them.

The combined picture of tribulation, deliverance, and exaltation in the Lord is given in such passages as Zech. xiv. 1-5, 9: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." Zeph. iii. 14-20, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments. He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee; and I will gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of

the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord." Of course, such passages could be multiplied almost indefinitely.

Thus we have gained a very brief sketch of the tribulation; and, notwithstanding its terrible features, its judgments, its baptisms of woe, yet its saving results and its issues of joy are such that we still cry out even more earnestly:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

VIII.

JEWISH SIGNS.

God has commonly seen fit, in connection with His prophecies of coming events, to designate particular things which should serve His watchful, trusting people as signs of the immediate approach or of the fulfillment of those events. Jesus complained of the religious leaders of His day, that they could not read the signs of their time. Quite a number of signs were given to point to Jesus as the Messiah in His first advent. His resurrection after three days in the grave was to be a final, imperative sign of His Messiahship.

Even more numerous signs are appointed of God and foretold in Scripture in connection with Christ's return. These signs relate to various spheres of the world's current events, social, religious, political, etc. A prominent line of signs belongs to national events, and chief in the list of nations for these signs stands the Jewish people. A passage which is probably intended to point our attention to the nations of the earth for signs of Christ's second coming is Luke xxi. 29-31: "And He spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." This shows that the proximity of Christ's return with the kingdom is to be betokened by certain new and surprising re-buddings of the nations, pre-eminently the Jewish nation, of which the fig tree is the well-known type.

It is to be noticed, however, that signs in relation to Christ's return may refer to the different stages of that event, and so they would not all fall within the same brief period of time or be of the same immediate importance to the waiting church.

Perhaps the best service that this chapter can render in the line of Jewish signs of present moment, is to bring out a panorama of Jewish history in the last days which close the present dispensation and usher in the millenium, a panorama which will show just where we are standing to-day with reference to the Lord's return. This panorama is given us in Ezek. xxxvi.-xlviii. The entire text cannot be quoted, but it should be read as we progress.

Chap. xxxvi. relates to the physical reviving of the Holy Land preparatory to its being reoccupied by Israel. Read verses 1-7 as a literal prediction of the recovery of the land physically from its arid and disgraceful state of unfruitfulness. Then notice how the following verses represent this rejuvenating of the land as a preparation for immediate occupancy by Israel as a renewed and reunited nation. "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their

inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men" (verses 8-12). "For I will take you from among the heathen" (all Gentile nations), "and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land" (verse 24). Here, then, is a regathering of all Israel, the "Ten Lost Tribes" included, out from all lands for a perpetual and exclusive reoccupation of the promised land. This restoration of Israel is one of the principal features of Christ's return and reign. And the sign that that is about to occur is to be found in the physical rejuvenation of the land so long barren and waste. Now, as a matter of well-known fact, the land of Palestine, after lying fruitless and waste for many centuries, so that it bereaved the people of men, *i. e.,* starved off the inhabitants and rendered it impossible for the Jews to subsist there, is undergoing in our day this physical reviving. The barrenness has been due to the divine withholding of the "latter rains," *i. e.,* the rains of late winter; but the prophecies expressly promise their renewal in the last days prior to the Lord's return (Joel ii. 23; Zech. x. 1). This promise is being fulfilled under our eyes in these last few years. Colonies have been settled in various parts of the land, agriculture and horticulture have been renewed most successfully, so that products from Palestine have taken the premium in the last ten years in European fairs. We are plainly living to-day in Ezek. xxxvi. 8: "O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come." If there were no immigration into Palestine going on, or preparations for it, we would know from this passage that such returning of the Jews to the Holy Land is impending. But already very large increase of Jewish population has recently taken place in Jerusalem and Palestine,

The rest of the chapter tells why God scattered Israel among all nations for this long time, how He sets Himself in pity to re-gather them at the last, how He will regenerate and sanctify them spiritually, and establish them perpetually in their land.

Chapter xxxvii opens with the familiar vision of the dry bones and their resurrection (verses 1-10). We are not left to imaginary "spiritualizing" interpretation of these verses. The interpretation is given in verses 11-14: "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: Behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." Never were Israelites more despondent about ever becoming a nation again in their own land than twenty years ago. "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." This does not mean a bodily resurrection of departed Israelites, but the resurrection of a nation scattered and buried among the nations of the earth, with no national spirit or power of re-gathering and reorganization.

Now, we are living in the midst of this passage today. Within ten years past a breath supernatural and unforeseen has come upon scattered Israelites, and instead of the despairing watch-word: "Amalgamate with the nations where we live!" "Israel, back to Palestine! A nation once more!" is the watch-word of a "Zionistic movement," which has spread over all lands and has already assembled six great annual councils at

Basle, Switzerland. It is a purely secular movement. But it is the shaking of the dry bones, their reunion and uprising in form; the breath of not only new national life, but also of new spiritual life will come in due season from the same divine source. The rest of the chapter emphasizes under the figure of the two sticks, or scepters, the reunion of the two and the ten tribes, which since the death of Solomon have constituted two kingdoms, and that this reorganization is to be under Christ as the perpetual Davidic head, and in a state of spiritual purity and blessing, with the sanctuary of God in their midst, not as a mere unoccupied edifice, but as the actual abode of God in His glory.

In Chap. xxxviii. a great black cloud arises and spreads over this promising prospect of Israelitish restoration. Verses 1-7 describe the massing of a vast international army for some momentous purpose in the mind of God. Verses 8, 9 show that this unparalleled combination of nations in battle array occurs in these same last days, and that this host is to overspread the land of Israel after being recovered from the sway of the Sultan's sword, and after being repeopled by the Israelitish detachments from all lands of the earth, who shall have been permitted to return, to settle peaceably, to rebuild the waste places and find apparent security and prosperity. "After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee." Again in verses 14-17: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God; In that day

when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land: it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?"

We have here another, a different, and yet a very recognizable picture of that unparalleled tribulation which we have seen was to befall Israel immediately prior to Christ's descent. This international host is the army of Antichrist by which he intends to annihilate the covenant people. Israel shall have returned to their land in great numbers. They are now negotiating for peaceable possession as an independent, but neutral state. They are preparing to return by millions. The hardships, disabilities and persecutions of their situation in Russia and elsewhere make their exodus urgent. It is reliably stated that material for a new temple at Jerusalem has been for some time in process of preparation, the temple in which Antichrist will impiously exhibit himself in his claims to exclusive divine character on earth. We remember that this ante-advent restoration of Jews is in impenitence and worldly pride. Their security and prosperity in the land will increase this spirit and ripen them for the tribulation at the hands of Antichrist.

Now, we are living in Ezek. xxxviii. 1-7, *i. e.,* the days of worldwide armament and combination, the ultimate end of which is to be the invasion of the Holy

Land under the Antichrist. We may not be able to decipher accurately the names and descriptions of the component elements of this international host, but the fore-front of the host is from northern lands, while Asiatic and African bands, besides other "many people," belong to the assemblage of arms.

The remainder of Ezek. 38, namely, vss. 18-23, describes the coming of the Lord, at the critical moment, to rescue poor Israel and to overthrow this defiant host most awfully. Chapter 39 continues the subject, informing us, in vs. 2, that but one-sixth of that vast host shall escape. "Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God" (verses 4-5).

The notableness of this event is indicated in verse 8: "Behold, it is come and it is done," saith the Lord God; "this is the day whereof I have spoken." Then verses 9, 10 give an idea of the immensity of this host of the slain by the statement that their weapons furnish fire-wood for the Israelites in the land for seven years, while their trees are allowed to grow up again untouched: "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons,—and they shall burn them with fire seven years: so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire, and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God." Moreover, in verses 11, 16 it is shown that to cleanse the land of the carcasses all the Israelites will be engaged for seven months in burying them in one common valley of burial, after which special employees shall carry the same work forward in scat-

tered detail until finished. "Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God" (verse 13). The next verses (verses 17-22) explain that God prevents an awful pestilence from so many corpses by assembling in a supernatural way an innumerable host of birds and beasts to devour their flesh immediately, so that nothing but skeletons shall remain for burial. The closing verses of chapter 39 speak of the effect upon the nations of the world and upon Israel of this momentous event; the nations in general shall be filled with awe before the Lord, and shall understand that for sin God punished Israel by scattering them throughout the earth, but only until He might gather them again to be true to Him and a glory in the earth. And of Israel it is written (verses 28, 29): "Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." Surely, this has never yet been accomplished for Israel; but we live under the shadow of its wonderful fulfillment. And it will be noticed how section after section of God's word brings us out at the same point, the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth in the person of Christ as the literal King of the Jews, the King of kings and Lord of lords in the whole earth.

We may cast a glance over the remaining chapters of Ezekiel, reserving for another chapter a more detailed description of the millennial period. Chaps. xl.-xlii. carry us right over into the millennium and describe the plans and specifications of the millennial Jerusalem and the millennial temple as they will be rebuilt

under the immediate direction of Jesus Christ as King on earth over Israel. Chap. xliii. opens with a prophecy of the return of the glory of the God of Israel into this new temple after such a long absence. This glory is not symbolical but personal, that of the person of Jesus Christ, who could not enter the temple of old in glory but only in reproof. Then follows the law of the altar and ordinances for the priests of the new dispensation (Chaps. xliii., xliv.). The next chapter gives direction concerning a portion of the land to be set aside for the millennial sanctuary and city, and concerning a portion for "the prince," directions concerning the princes of the land and certain sacrifices. Chap. xlvi. concerns the sacrifices of worship for the prince and for the people. This is all to be taken literally, remembering only that it is to be the order in the millennium. We might not naturally expect sacrifices to be re-established in the millennium, and especially under the presence of the King Himself. But such is to be the fact. We may say with certainty, that those sacrifices will not be typically atoning, but will probably be of a memorial and eucharistic character. In Chap. xlvii. 1-12 we have the description of a wonderful, but literal "river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Ps. xlvi. 4). This river is spoken of in different places; and we learn also that the millennial Jerusalem is to be a marine metropolis by virtue of a waterway through her midst connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea.

Then verses 13-22 give the borders of the land of Israel after their restoration under Jesus Christ. A land was promised Abraham and to his seed, which has never yet been nearly occupied in full. "His seed" means Christ, as we learn in Gal. iii. 16. And at His coming that whole promised territory

will be taken in possession, spreading from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and from the Euphrates to the Red Sea, according to the plot given in these verses. Then Chap. xlviii. gives the allotment of this entire inheritance to the twelve tribes, to each tribe a breadth reaching right through from the extreme east to the extreme west. This is an entirely new allotment among the tribes, made on an entirely different principle of assignment and division. Instead of casting lots, as of old, the assignment will be by this prophetic plan. And instead of a crazy-quilt division of a little central territory, the division is to be in noble and regular partitions of the entire breadth of the land. Then the location of the tribes in relation to one another is so different from that of old: beginning on the north, Dan is first; then Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben and Judah. Then comes the "holy oblation," the middle section of the whole territory which is to be set aside for the temple, the city, the prince, and the Levites. Then the other tribes succeed in order, Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulon, and Gad. And finally, after a further brief description of the sacred city, the prophetic account closes most significantly for our theme with the name of this city: "The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there." Yes, it will not be long before the Lord shall be on earth, in the city of Jerusalem as King of the Jews. The "Jewish Signs" of the present day point clearly to this fact and so thrill our hearts that we cry again:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

IX.

OTHER SIGNS.

In dealing with the subject of the manifold signs in connection with our Lord's return, two principles need to be observed, lest we fall into the mistake either of precipitancy or of confusion of judgment. The first principle is, that allowance for progressive development may need to be made in some signs. For instance, a certain condition of things may be required as a sign, like that of an enormous massing of wealth in the hands of the rich, and that condition may already exist in a striking degree. But, before inferring that the present condition serves to prove that the end is right at hand, we need to recognize that a much further development of this condition may occur before the end is reached. The principle of progressiveness in the full arrival of the signs is not to be forgotten. Then, the second principle is, that the prophecies speak of "latter days" and of "last days," two stages of closing events, corresponding, perhaps, to the two stages of Christ's return; and each stage might safely be supposed to have its separate class of signs, which a superficial observer might throw into an indiscriminate bunch. For instance, signs are indicated as immediately presaging the tribulation; others are dated "immediately after the tribulation." Although we have already distinguished between Jewish signs and other signs, we might almost add it as a third principle here, that particular notice needs to be taken of given signs, to see whether they are to be looked for in Israel, or in the church, or in the world. Hence we see the need of wisdom and prudence in dealing with signs. We are

to be wary of sensational interpretations. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?" (Hosea xiv. 9).

We will touch on a few lines of signs, which seem to be clearly indicated by the Word for our general enlightenment as to the near approach of the end. These are not supposed to be unfamiliar to most readers, and we will not presume to find ground for sweeping conclusions.

1. Political signs. We have seen that, in connection with the revival of the fig-tree as a type of reawakened Israel, the other trees or nations are to be expected to show marks of unusual development. One of these marks is very much emphasized by prophecy and is very easy to detect. This is the sign of striking universal military development. Joel iii. 9, 10, "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong." The succeeding verses show that this prophecy has direct reference to the military climax to be reached in the closing stage of the tribulation; or, more exactly, on the eve of the crowning tribulation of Israel. Yet such a climax is reached by a comparatively protracted preparation, during which the foreshadowings of the consummation may be clearly discerned. We saw in the last chapter, that, coincident with Israel's revival into national consciousness and anticipation, a remarkable preparation of armed hosts in combination would be going on preparatory to Israel's final ordeal. We are, then, to look for marked tokens of this military consummation just at the time the stir is going on among the dry bones of scattered Israel.

We do not need to burden these pages with details

on the current military movements and developments of our day. They are as noticeable as the movement going on among the Jews. The sentiments, decisions, and arrangements of the Peace Congress did not check the feverish activities of all nations in increasing enormously their military equipments. Agricultural and industrial interests and resources are fast becoming swallowed up in military appropriations. And a very striking feature is the sudden exhibition of marvelous strength by nations that had been rated as weaklings. Our own nation was ridiculed as nothing but a nation of trades-people up to the time of the Spanish war. Where does our country stand to-day in the ranks of the great powers? Surely, it is a case of a weak nation, from the military standpoint, shaking itself, and saying: "I am strong," and forthwith proving it. Or look at Japan, but little over fifty years ago forced out of heathen and almost savage exclusiveness by the doxology and our gunboats. These lines are written five days after her daring challenge to a single-handed combat with hoary, elephantine Russia. Surely little Japan is saying, "I am strong," and the mightiest nations of the earth are giving her the respect due to an equal power.

We can even detect already the tendency to international combination, which the prophecies show will be consummated at last in a worldwide consolidation, Israel alone excepted, under the supremacy of Antichrist.

2. Industrial signs. Let us read Jas. v. 1-7: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." This indicates the heaping up of masses of unused

wealth, largely going to waste and decay. And yet, as the next sentence indicates, it is a time when the unprecedented opportunities and solemn responsibilities of the last days are pending: "Ye have heaped treasure together for," that is, in "the last days." Never was there a day like this for the mere heaping together of wealth. The next declaration relates to unrighteous and oppressive methods in gaining these treasures: "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." Great corporations not infrequently keep a certain number of months in arrears to their employes, to say nothing of the manifold ways in which fraud is practiced by the strong and rich upon the weak and poor. Then follows the reckless rivalry in the lavish use of wealth for pleasure and display: "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." Follow up the accounts of social functions for a short time in even our own democratic land, and this charge is seen to be timely. And notice that this is all on the eve of a stupendous crisis, as though victims for the market were just being glutted for a brief season before slaughter. This is all characterized as personal outrage upon the Lord, the Just One: "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you." This condition is abhorrent to Christ, but He suffers it for the time in silence and submission. Hence the admonition to His followers not to strike and combine for redress, but, "Be patient therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord.*" This impending terminus of their patience, taken together with the reference above to the "last days," shows that this passage, opening with the apostrophe: "Go to now," is a prophecy of the days near to the coming of

Christ. And the fact that our own day is so strikingly pictured in these verses proves that we are living under the shadow of the second advent.

3. Social signs. We need not dwell upon this topic much, as it has already been partly included in the preceding. General social conditions as a sign of the end of the age are depicted in Luke xxi. 34, 35: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." These cannot be those last days of the tribulation-epoch just prior to Christ's descent from the sky, but rather the days of serenity and lull, on the eve of Christ's arrival in the sky, prior to the tribulation, when Christ's follower will have to guard against ease and indulgence, earthly care and preoccupation, which are more insidious foes than fire and sword. Surely our present day is in full accord with this sign that the Bridegroom may any day draw up His bride to meet Him in the air.

4. Intellectual signs. The Word indicates that the last days will witness the highest flights of human intellect. Intellectualism is one of the peculiar danger lines of our day, and it constitutes a distinct sign of prophecy. Dan. xii. 4, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Travel and culture are here in view as prominent features of "the end." Even the special modern interest in Palestinian relics and explorations may be referred to in Ps. cii. 13, 14: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come." And this is the sign: "For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

5. Moral Signs. We have a fearful picture drawn of the moral conditions which will distinguish the last days. 2 Tim. iii. 1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." This evidently describes a condition even among religious classes. It takes but little close scrutiny to find that, underneath the thin disguise of refinement and morality, there is an awful condition of demoralization swiftly developing in society, even in the church. It is not pretended that this picture is fully due yet; but is it not already sketched in the rough? In respect to intemperance, social evil, divorce, suicide, homicide, the statistics prove a most startling advance going on, and that in no natural ratio of increase.

6. Doctrinal signs. In Paul's earlier letter to Timothy he forewarns us of the remarkable changes of doctrinal views which will characterize "the latter times," which clearly account for the fearful moral condition which appears in the "last days." 1 Tim. iv. 1-3, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." This apostasy from the old foundations of truth is mentioned by Paul as a latter day movement and sign of the times in 2 Thess. ii. 3. To

any one occupying a religious point of view, nothing is more marked to-day than just this thing. Old faiths have been scattered before the winds of various doctrines and interpretations, which have captivated thousands and millions of professed Christians and many ministers in a way that can be understood only as a bewitchment of demons.

7. Ecclesiastical signs. Instead, however, of this apostasy overthrowing nominal Christianity and ecclesiastical institutions, it results in the rapid and endless multiplication of pretentious "churchianity." And this is another sign of the times. Rev. iii. 14-22 gives the last message of the Master to His declining church, His last call just prior to His arrival for His own true ones. It is the Laodicean, the lukewarm epoch of the church, neither cold nor hot. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." This rebuke to the church as a whole, and this call to individuals in this self-satisfied ecclesiasticism, is enforced by the advent argument: "To him that overcometh," that is, overcometh this last foe of general self-satisfaction and lukewarmness, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." What is the way out of this modern ecclesiastical deception? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

8. Spiritual signs. Yes, there is a vast difference between religious and ecclesiastical signs and spiritual signs. Religion and church are not necessarily synonymous with the spiritual. It became the burning ques-

tion with the writer about a dozen years ago, after having his eyes opened to the shadow signs already mentioned, whether the age was to close with shadows only, whether spirituality was to be a diminishing force until the end came, or whether, coincident with the shadows, there should also be unusual spiritual light. It was a question for God to answer Himself. His answer was apprehended after long continued waiting through various passages, but especially through Jas. v. 7, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." The context connects this directly with the Lord's coming as the ground for the patient endurance of the increasing oppressions of the last days in the industrial and commercial lines already brought out. The husbandman suggests the sovereign Father. His only reason for letting the increasingly desperate condition of things in the last days continue, is that precious fruit is ripening and must not be prematurely gathered. This proves that the last days mean a spiritual ripening. Then, it is "the precious fruit of the earth." This implies both the finest fruit and an earth-wide fruit. This, in turn, implies the preaching of the gospel in all the earth and the ripening process following. Further, the early and the latter rain very strongly suggest that the last days are to witness outpourings of the Spirit corresponding to the first outpourings. In lands of the early and latter rains the soil is mellowed and the seed started with the early rain, in November and December. Then, after a long interval of comparatively little rainfall, in February and March copious downfalls occur to bring the harvest through to abundance and perfection. We seem to be assured by the passage that we are to look for increasing spiritual demonstration as the latter days go by even to the de-

gree of apostolic and Pentecostal times. We do not postpone Christ's appearing, but only hold ourselves to the bright outlook in the meantime while He tarries. And how truly this sign is transpiring before our eyes! While the apostasy is developing rapidly, spiritual simplicity, separation, association, and power are increasing. The long lost gifts of the Spirit are being recovered. What was gradually lost is being gradually recovered; and we may hope for a concluding outpouring upon the upper-room gatherings in all parts of the earth, under which thousands of souls in thousands of localities shall be swept into the kingdom in a Pentecostal way.

9. Celestial and terrestrial signs. Most remarkable signs of siderial, atmospheric, physical and terrestrial character are repeatedly predicted in the Word. They seem to be chiefly associated with the very last days prior to our Lord's descent from the sky. For instance, Joel ii. 30, 31; Matt. xxiv. 29, etc. No doubt startling presages of these final horrors are already due, and they may be detected in the various appalling calamities of the day, like the sudden destruction of St. Pierre. But into this field we are not prepared to enter with profit. Howbeit, the first use of the celestial luminaries mentioned in Gen. i. 14 is for signs: "And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years." There is, therefore, a most legitimate and important field of "astronomical signs."

These "other signs" cause us to pray with still greater intelligence and fervor:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

X.

CHRIST'S COMING WITH HIS SAINTS.

We now come to the second and closing stage of Christ's return to this world. There are two senses in which He will come with His saints. He will bring the departed saints with Him when He comes from His present place with the Father into our earthly skies, that they may be reunited to their sleeping bodies and gathered with the transformed living saints back into the sky with the Lord while He there tarries. Then, when He descends from our sky to the earth, the entire company of the saints will descend and appear with Him on earth.

The first sense is clearly maintained by 1 Thess. iv. 14: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

This fact warrants our digressing a little to point out that departed saints do not sleep with their bodies in the tomb, but pass in spirit to a happy abode and resting with Christ before the Father. This is so clearly taught in the New Testament, that it is a wonder that any other thought could enter into a person's mind. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. i. 21-24). The only way, then, to be immediately with Christ is to depart from life in the flesh. On this account death

is gain over present life. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord," or, as we may read it, away from home in the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 6-8). What could be plainer than that death is a departure from residence in the body to an actual and blessed residence with the bodily Christ, until our home shall come to be with Him in our glorified bodies after His coming?

This leads us to dwell a moment also upon the literalness of the bodily resurrection. It were a folly, which very few ever perpetrate, to deny the fact that Christ arose and ascended and will reappear in His very pierced body. But He is only "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv. 20). Resurrection-harvest must be of the same literal kind. And yet there was something entirely new about His resurrection-body. He could conceal or reveal Himself. His body was not subject to the laws of mere matter. He could eat, but did not need to for subsistence. He was free from gravitation and yet not buoyant. So, the bodies of the saints in glory will be identical with their bodies of humiliation, only having glorification in place of humiliation, immortality in place of mortality. In other words, our bodies are to be regenerated like our spirits and given to enjoy eternal life. The natural and the spiritual bodies are not two bodies, but two opposite states of one and the same body. In the case of dying saints, an intermediate stage of existence without the body transpires, while in the case of saints living at Christ's coming the great change will occur without dissolution, without any departure out of the body itself. Now the departed saints are first resurrected, and, apparently, stand for a momentary period at least upon the earth while the

living saints are changed into immortality like them, when the entire company are swept into the pavilion of the Lord in the skies in a cloud of glory. Without any question, not only will the essential identity of body be preserved in the saints, but likewise their entire recognizability. And yet present deformities will doubtless be eliminated and color-lines wiped out with glory.

While the saints are in the sky with the Lord they are examined and judged as to their services for the Lord while here below, of which we will more fully speak in a later chapter. The marriage of the Lord with His bride, the church, will also take place, and the marriage supper will be celebrated. A word of suggestion on these sacred mysteries. The natural use of the term marriage relates to the uniting of two "in one flesh." This suggests that probably this spiritual use of the word relates to the union of Christ's uplifted saints with Him bodily through the glorification of their bodies in His likeness. Thus the mystical union with Him now begun in their spirits will be completed in their bodies, when they become full and perpetual partakers of His glory-life and radiance. And the "Lord's Supper" may furnish a clew to the meaning of the "Marriage Supper." The broken emblems of the former signify His body crucified for our saving subsistence of soul, and our partaking of those emblems signifies our oneness with Him in present suffering and humiliation. May not the other supper mean the beginning of our perpetual appropriation of Him bodily-wise in the wedlock of His bodily glory? He shall glorify us with Himself; that is, out of His own being, both as an inaugural event and as a perpetual maintenance of our glorified being.

While Christ is yet in the sky there is to be indication of the fact to the earthly beholder through some sign called "the sign of the Son of man in heaven"

(Matt. xxiv. 30). Whether this awful omen appears at once upon His entrance into our heavens or not is not clear; but it would seem that it is hung out in solemn portent for some time before His descent. It is apparently in defiance of it that we read of the Antichrist in Rev. xiii. 6: "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven."

The principal sense, however, of Christ's coming with His saints is that of His descent from the sky to the earth with their company. This is the most stupendous event that has been impending through all the ages: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied—, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14, 15).

The testimony of Scripture leaves no room to question the literal personality of this coming. And the literal bodily and visible nature of the coming is just as clear. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11). "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven" (1 Thess. iv. 16). "If I go, I will come again" (John xiv. 3). "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. i. 7). This may mean a universal sight of the descending Jesus, the dead as well as the living, the very Jews that crucified Him, as well as their representatives living at the time of

His descent. At any rate it does mean a spectacular manifestation of the Lord to the whole world. "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day" (Luke xvii. 24). It is sometimes objected that if Christ descended at Jerusalem He could not be seen from San Francisco. But simply suppose that He should take even so little time as twenty-four hours in descending. Then the whole round world would have beheld the glorious spectacle.

The divine and celestial pageantry of the scene of the Lord's descent is unimaginable. Fortunately the Scriptures give some description of it. First, the person is described: "The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 14, 15). "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. xix. 11-16). Not only will He be attended by all the glorified saints, but also by throngs of angels. "And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God

worship Him" (Heb. i. 6). "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke ix. 26). "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power. Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet" (Hab. iii. 3-5).

This arrival of Christ in the earth will be attended with appalling physical phenomena. "The mountains saw Thee, and they trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of Thine arrows they went, and at the shining of Thy glittering spear" (Hab. iii. 10, 11). "Lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (Rev. vi. 12-14). "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former [eastern] sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be" (Zech. xiv. 4-8).

It is not to be wondered at that Christ's descent from the skies in power and glory, with angelic escort, with all His glorified saints, and with such attendant convulsions of nature, will strike terror and dismay to the hearts of the great multitudes of the earth's inhabitants, especially to His enemies, whom He will make "His footstool" (Heb. x. 13). "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 15-17). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. i. 7-9). "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion" (Is. xxxiv. 1, 2, 8).

The last quotation introduces us to the thought of the deliverance the coming of Christ will mean to Israel from her enemies. We have already seen that Israel is beforehand to be largely regathered in the holy land, but in impenitency. Finally the combined armies of the Antichrist will swoop down upon the

land and upon Jerusalem with fearful destruction. This crowning tribulation of Jacob will have the result of leaving a small remnant of poor and penitent people, who will long for the Messiah and gladly welcome Him in the person of Jesus Christ. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all [remaining] Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi: 25, 26). "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. iv. 2, 3). "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. xii. 6-10). "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people and the strength of the

children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am as the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (Joel iii. 16, 17). Read in connection the whole chapter. Also on this most dramatic scene of the Lord's deliverance of imperiled Israel, read Is. xl. 1, 2, 5, 10, 11; lxvi. 13; Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16; Dan. xii. 1, and many other passages.

Now, in conclusion, we will mark the significance of the presence of the saints with Christ on this most august and glorious occasion. Not only will they be spectators of all and participants as attendants with Him, but they will greatly add to the glory of the Lord Himself by their own manifestation. Not that they will have anything of their own with which to add to His glory. But they will add to His glory by the manifestation along with Him of that glory which shall have been communicated to them by Him. "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day" (2 Thess. i. 10). This shows that the saints shall so show forth the glory and likeness of Christ in themselves, that the sight of them will create admiration and praise of Him. This manifestation of the glorified Son of man in His saints is something that this lower creation is waiting for in the intensest anticipation: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19). Their liberation from humiliation and mortality into the glory of the glorified Son of man will be the sure omen, as well as the sample, of the entire fallen creation's liberation which is to follow in the fully consummated regeneration and restitution of all things.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

XI.

THE MILLENNIUM.

The meaning of the term "millennium" is the thousand years of Christ's visible reign upon the earth, which will follow His return. While this age is mentioned many, many times throughout the Bible, yet the only place where it is explicitly described as a millennium, or period of a thousand years, is Rev. xx. 1-7. Here five things are stated in direct connection with a thousand years: 1. Satan is bound and shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, being thereby prevented for that period from deceiving the nations any more. 2. Christ is reigning for the same thousand years upon the earth. 3. The believers of the first resurrection are living and reigning with Christ on the earth during the same thousand years. 4. The rest of the dead are waiting for their resurrection until after the thousand years. 5. Satan is loosed upon the earth again for "a little season" after the thousand years, "to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth."

It seems clear, in the light of the foregoing passage, that 2 Pet. iii. 8, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," indicates that "the day of the Lord," which is so frequently mentioned in all the Scriptures, is a period of one thousand years. And standing at our present point of earthly history, at about the end of six thousand years and so clearly on the very eve of a new dispensation, we can easily see that the millennium concludes a sabbatical cycle of thousands of years. Hence the sab-

batical types all become types of this grand dispensation and enter in as further proofs that we must be upon the eve of that wonderful climax of ages.

By way of further preliminary we may remark that four conditions are necessary to the millennium. In the absence of these four prerequisites the millennium is yet future and cannot be realized.

1. The end of Antichrist. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John ii. 18). That is, the existence of antichrists is proof that the Antichrist is on the way and sure to come before any dispensational change occurs; and the time of antichrists and of Antichrist is "the last time." That is, it is the last time, or the last dispensation, prior to Christ's appearance in glory and power; and that means the last time for antichrists, for when the true Christ shall have appeared, the rise of antichrists will have been rendered forever impossible. The end of Antichrist is very distinctly portrayed in Rev. xix. 20, "And the beast [the Antichrist] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Thus the Antichrist and his immediate herald and prophet will be finally cast out into the unescapable lake of fire, while his international army is utterly overthrown in its tracks. The world will never again hear of a false Christ.

2. The banishment of Satan from the earth. As we have before seen, Christ first drives Satan from his headquarters in the sky, the capital of his ancient dominion. During the tribulation epoch he is confined to earthly regions. But the closing act of Christ's over-

throw of enemies upon His arrival is thus described: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled and after that he must be loosed a little season." So, while Satan will for the thousand years be to the world a nonentity, so far as active influence is concerned, yet it is not the last of him in the earth, although he never will be admitted again into his old quarters in the sky.

3. The personal presence of Christ in glory as reigning King. Twice it is distinctly stated that Christ is manifested in actual reign during the thousand years. This dispensation of the millennium is dependent upon this, then, as also upon the absence of Satan and the final overthrow of Antichrist. And nothing can be made out of the matter at all, if it be so explained as to take away the literalness of these factors, and to make the millennium something already come but not noticeable, or to push it off indefinitely into the future beyond a climax of perfection to be reached under existing movements.

4. The presence of the saints of all ages alive and embodied in glory and actively associated with Christ in millennial administration. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (verse 6).

The world will, then, see no millennium without the cessation for the time of Satan's relations to mankind, without the visible and kingly presence of Christ, and without the visible, glorified presence and exalted

activities of the saints. We will survey this great dispensation under several aspects.

I. The personal reign of Jesus Christ as the divine King from heaven upon the earth. "He shall send Jesus Christ, which was before preached unto you" (Acts iii. 20). "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6).

1. He is to reign as King of the Jews. Under Jesus Christ Israel will be a divine monarchy. From Nathaniel Jesus accepted the acknowledgment of being the "King of the Jews" as truly and literally as "Son of God" (John i. 49). Before the Roman governor Pilate Jesus acknowledged Himself to be the King of the Jews, as He had acknowledged Himself to be the Son of God before the Sanhedrim, and Pilate treated Him as meaning just what He said (John xviii. 33-xix. 22). It was upon this acknowledgment that He was mockingly crowned and enrobed, and then crucified. The ancient promises and prophecies of God to Israel cannot be taken in any consistency in any other meaning. The Jews have always understood them thus. And we have seen how harmoniously all prophecies combine to this culmination.

2. He shall also reign over the whole world as the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords. The government of the world under Him will be a universal divine empire. "All dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Da. vii. 27). "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. lxxii. 11). "The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Ti. vi. 14, 15). The Scriptures deal extensively with this world-wide character of Christ's reign.

3. He shall occupy the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. This is definitely declared by many

Scriptures and cannot be indirectly construed without overthrowing at once the whole principle of prophetic interpretation. Not to go further back, it was the explicit promise to the Virgin Mary in calling her to be the mother of Jesus: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Lu. i. 32).

4. He is to reign as Prince of Peace. This indicates the character of His kingdom over Israel and of His empire over the world. "Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Is. ix. 7). It will be peace founded upon the thorough execution of judgment and righteousness. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. lxxii. 7).

5. He shall rule with a scepter of righteousness and a rod of iron. This is not inconsistent with the previous aspect, but is necessitated by the fact that, even in the millennium and with Satan out of the way, all people will not be righteous or even righteously disposed, so that, in order to a state of peace and righteous prosperity, swift punishment will need to be visited upon all appearance of disobedience and iniquity. "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (Heb. i. 8). "He shall rule them," the nations, "with a rod of iron" (Rev. xix. 15).

II. The kingdom of Israel.

Politically, Israel will be a nation once more, a monarchy under the sceptre of their Messiah, united as to all the tribes, gathered from all nations, so that not one individual shall remain in a foreign land, settled in the whole territory originally deeded to Abraham, namely, nearly all of the country bounded by the

Mediterranean Sea, the Euphrates River, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Materially, this land will be like the garden of Eden for fertility and beauty, while the glory and power of the Lord will make manifest many wonders beyond the natural. Spiritually, the people will all be righteous, born of the Spirit and filled and imbued after the type of Paul, the apostle. What an object-lesson to the world, for one whole nation to be actually holy and incorruptible, following the Lamb-King in perfect fellowship!

Some few out of the many passages of the Bible will be quoted and others referred to, which will illustrate these features of millennial Israel.

"I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness [Christ] to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. xxxiii. 7-9, 11, 14-16).

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful

and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all [these dwellings and assemblies] the glory [canopy] shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle [beneath this cloud of glory] for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" (Is. iv. 2-6). This describes the spiritual perfection of the nation, and the wonderful supernatural manifestation and provision over the abodes and gatherings of Mount Zion, reminding us of the canopy of cloud and fire which guided and sheltered Israel in the wilderness of old.

"Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the

bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Is. lxv. 18-25).

Many other passages of the same import, yet with most interesting variations, might be cited, like Zech. viii. 3-15; Amos viii. 11-15; Joel iii. 18-21, etc. A little further testimony regarding Israel's supremacy over all other nations, only for their blessing, may be given. "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (Ps. xlvii. 3). "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut by day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Is. lx. 3, 5, 10-12, 14).

III. The nations of the world.

As has already appeared, while the Gentile nations are to be in subordination to Israel in the millennium, yet their condition will in every way be far above their present state.

1. Politically, the nations will be readjusted in their territories in relations of justice to one another and preference to Israel. This will be a return to the original basis: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of

Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9). The nations will be placed on an absolute peace basis, such that military practice will be utterly forgotten: "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. ii. 4). While they will have their different chosen and accustomed forms of government, yet their heads will all be directly subordinate and accountable to Jesus Christ as the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords.

2. Materially, all lands will partake in measure of the physical renovation and quickening, which the reign of Christ will bring. "Then shall the earth yield her increase" (Ps. lxvii. 6). Even nature itself will experience new pulsations of life from the hand of the reigning Christ, her original creator. The world's toilers will experience an ease in toil and will reap returns from toil not known before for thousands of years. "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity" (Ps. xcviii. 8, 9). The abolition of war, the absence of satanic temptations and practices, the stable, righteous and beneficent government of things will greatly conduce to world-wide material prosperity. We must, however, in all respects read the Scriptures with due discrimination in regard to the wonderful change in things here in the land of Israel, there in other lands. The millennial condition of the nations in general will not be comparable with that of Israel.

3. Spiritually, it is to be noticed that a generation of

earth's inhabitants passes over from the present dispensation to the millennial. While there will be a vast destruction of human life under the final judgments of the second advent, yet it will go only so far as to rid the earth of all elements that "will not have this man rule over" them. Those who are so sold out to Satan and his Antichrist as to be incapable of submission to the coming King will be wiped from the face of the earth. The bulk of the earth's population, however, will survive, not because of being godly in the spiritual sense, but because of willingness to meet the change of government peaceably. The millennium will be a time of great spiritual ingathering throughout the world. "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: *that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,* saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts xv. 16, 17). A peculiarity of the millennium will be the disposition of many to seek the Lord, without first being sought after by missionaries. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. ii. 3). "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23). Besides that which is so spontaneous, the whole world will be obliged to go up every autumn by delegations to Jerusalem to worship before Christ and receive the law from His mouth directly. This will be the anti-type of the

feast of tabernacles. See Zech. xiv. 16-19. Besides this, the presence and ministry of the Lord's messengers throughout the world will bring the Scripture to pass: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. xi. 9).

IV. The Saints. Much has already been expressed in regard to the glorified saints, who are to appear with Christ to engage in the grand dispensation of the millennium.

1. Their bodily condition. Little needs to be added to what has been said. While their bodies will be no longer of the earth earthy, yet this will not incapacitate them for earthly residence and activity. Christ needed no food for His resurrection body, but He could eat and enjoy it. He was not hindered from any bodily movement by the barriers of matter, yet He could be as visibly present to sight and touch as ever. He was released from gravitation, and yet could move about on foot with all the more ease and celerity. Glory added to resurrection will not alter these liberties, whether for Him or for His saints. They will be a people familiar with the earth from former residence, most deeply interested with Christ in the earth, yet a people of heavenly image.

2. Their associations. While the saints come back to earth as to an old home, and take up activities over earthly affairs, and while they will be able and disposed to have very blessed intercourse with earthly inhabitants, yet their associations will not be either exclusively or principally earthly. We can see this fact from all the cases of visitation from the other world recorded in the Scriptures. The saints will not return into the social and domestic conditions of former times. Quite likely they will not be altogether resident in the earth, but more or less in the heaven above, and yet not in too secluded a sense. Their more intimate asso-

ciations will evidently be with the Lord and with one another, yet with most devoted concern for their earthly charges.

3. Their occupations. In a general way, we are left in no uncertainty as to the occupation of the saints during the millennium. Christ's bodily occupation will be as exclusively in the interest of the people of Israel and the nations of the earth as His occupation in His first advent was exclusively with needy souls to whom He was sent. In the millennium He will be occupied exclusively as a man in body with the government of Israel and of the redeemed nations. And His saints will be occupied fully with Him. Christ's government will surely affect every feature of human affairs, political, social, economical, benevolent, reformatory, educational, industrial, agricultural, as well as moral and spiritual, so that there will be very many positions of power and trust to be given to the saints. The twelve apostles will have tribal thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel, as we know from Christ's own words. In parable Christ represents that some of His servants will have rule over cities, two, five, or ten, as it may be. Daniel is to stand again in his lot in the last days (Dan. xii:13). Such hints show us the real practical and earthly character of these things. They also suggest strongly a logical connection between the lines or spheres of service now and those of rule hereafter. May we not hope to be able to carry out with power, success and great results what now we weep and pray over, and yet with only the most partial results? How much more real it seems to contemplate an earthly sphere of practical and effective activity during the millennial age, rather than merely to be waving palm branches in some misty heights of celestial glory! "The meek shall inherit the earth." They do not now. They must, then, have

a future destiny in relation to this earth. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21). Christ overcame in a real way here on earth and actually ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father in His universal government; likewise the saints of Christ must really overcome in this life, and then will they have an actual part with Him in His personal and visible glorious rule in the earth during the millennium. The more vague, imaginary, and far-away we make the matter the more will we lose the real truth and force of it all.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

XII.

SERVICE AND REWARD.

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii. 12).

There are four important words in this verse: "Work"—personal activity—in distinction from faith, although the activity must be the working of faith; "Reward"—in distinction from salvation, which is of free grace, "the gift of eternal life; "Come"—His coming as the terminus of our working and the time of our reward, rather than dying and going to our reward; "Quickly"—His coming a sudden event, and always impending.

We will follow three lines of thought: I. The impending and sudden coming of Christ. II. Working in His fellowship and service in view of His coming. III. Our reward in the kingdom with Him at His coming.

I. The impending and sudden coming of Christ.

The coming of Christ Jesus is always impending in such a sense as to render it properly the dominating thought of our lives, the focus of our daily ambition. It was so with Enoch, way back there. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day and was glad (John viii. 56). Isaiah saw His glory (John xii. 41). In fine, the Old Testament worthies all saw this city of God that was to come on the earth; they received the promise of the same afar off, embraced it, and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers.

Christ bade His disciples and all of us to watch for His coming as continually impending. And yet not in

such a sense as necessarily implies that it is possible any moment, or in such a sense as makes knowledge of intervening time and events inconsistent with watching. Peter was expressly informed by the Lord that, after a period of apostolic ministry, he should suffer death by martyrdom. So Peter knew that Jesus could not return before he died, and all his fellow-believers were permitted to know the same. In fact, in his second epistle he speaks familiarly of his death (2 Pe. i. 14). Paul also knew beforehand that he was to die. He also instructs the Thessalonian Christians in a way that plainly implies that, not only the millennial age should not soon arrive, but even their gathering unto the Lord should not occur for a considerable time (2 Thess. ii. 1-3). Some of Christ's parables plainly teach a protracted period of service before His return with reward. See Lu. xix. 15, Matt. xxv. 19. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. was clearly foretold by Jesus as prior to His coming, and He even predicts an indefinite period succeeding that before His return. In fact everything in His teaching, apart from an unnecessarily restricted definition of the word "Watch," points to a distant return. And yet it was to the first disciples that He said, "Watch." Through them the word comes to us, and it must have the meaning for us that it had for them. Our watching does not require us to expect His coming any day regardless of all else. We, too, may have revelations from Him like Peter and Paul, that we are to do this or that and even die before He comes. Indeed, He made a distinction between the constant hope of His coming and the knowledge by appropriate signs that His coming is nigh. It is a mistake, then, to infer that His coming was postponed beyond the expectation of the early apostles, or that we cannot truly watch and yet plan for anything definitely before His arrival.

The point is, that life and work have the same relation to His coming a thousand years before as at the very time. At Christ's judgment-seat we will severally receive in resurrected body recompense according to what we now do in the mortal body, whether it be a longer or shorter time before He comes. To do anything differently to-day, because of knowing that He is not to come until to-morrow, is the very essence of unfaithfulness and blindness. The reward will be the same for our work whether it be done on the eve of His arrival or centuries before. Hence the essence of watching is to live as if He stood at the door. Jesus is coming, and our daily life and service are to be conducted with our eyes upon His coming, not upon the time of His coming, possible or impossible.

While His coming is more or less a matter of probability and even of knowledge as to the time, yet in the closest sense His coming will be "in such an hour as ye think not."

II. Working in His fellowship and service until He comes.

The believer is called to service as well as to salvation, to works as well as to faith. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." This is the ground upon which Paul exhorted Timothy to "stir up the gift of God" which was in him for service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10). "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. iv. 7). This gift of Christ is clearly for service, and every believer has such a gift prepared for him if not already in him. "To every man his work" is the rule of Christ's household.

There are three kinds of works, wicked works, dead

works, and good works. The greatest danger with believers is that, if they are not idle, they may still be occupied only with dead works, works of conscience, works of the law, works demanded of them by man, instead of the works which are directed and animated by the Spirit, which alone are good works. "The Lord working with them" is the criterion of good works. "They declared all things that God had done with them" (Acts xv. 4), is another way of expressing it. Or, as Paul said, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me" (Ro. xv. 18).

In other words, true service is in fellowship with Christ directly and personally. "Take my yoke upon you;" that is, yoke up with me. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." "Where I am there shall my servant be also." Where the Master is, is where need is, or any trouble that He could relieve. He is a very present help in trouble; there will we find Him present to us in His service. A monk had a most engaging manifestation of the presence of the Lord in his cell. The time came for him to meet the poor for the daily distribution of food. He was reluctant to tear himself away from the delightful vision, especially as he feared it might not wait for his return. But in looking into those tender eyes for the Lord's mind, the Master silently pointed him in the direction of the gate where the monk was expected at that hour by the needy. So he withdrew sorrowfully. After completing his ministrations, he hastened back with trembling, wondering whether he would find the Lord still in his cell. But He was there. When the monk said to Him that he feared He might have left, the Master replied, "Had you not gone, I must have gone." Most especially will true service be in the fellowship of His sufferings. Not

His atoning sufferings, of course, but those sufferings in the home, at the bench, in His ministry, from the unbelieving world, from the devil who hounded His tracks, from His own followers and friends, who so little understood and appreciated Him, who were so slow to follow in His own mind and motives.

Then, our service must be unto Him, if our reward is to be from Him. It is a rare thing for the Master to get an unselfish service. Many do their righteousnesses still to be seen of men; many still love the praise of man rather than that of God. "They have their reward;" that is the Pharisee. "Hoping for nothing in return"; that is the servant of the Lord. "Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee." Where then is the blessing? "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. iii. 17). Yet all is to be done for the Lord's rather than the Lord. He has need of nothing from us, but to minister from Him to those whose needs He makes His own. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matt. xxv. 40, 45). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

III. Reward in the kingdom with Christ.

Our calling is threefold, to salvation forever, to suffering service now, and to the kingdom with Christ in the coming age. As we have seen, the place where we are to have our reward is earthly. "Great is your reward in heaven" does not mean that heaven is the place where we are to enjoy our reward, but the place

where our reward is kept in the hands of the Master, and from which in due season our reward shall be brought for us.

The time is when the Lord returns in His kingdom on the earth. It is a mistake to speak of dying saints going to their reward, excepting that their labor for reward is done and their reward is henceforth an unchangeable matter.

We have already seen of what nature the reward is to be, namely, an actual partnership with Christ in the activities of the millennial kingdom. We scarcely need add anything further. We may, however, remark that there is a great difference between being translated into the kingdom of the Lord by the new birth and being rewarded in the kingdom. It is the difference between being a child of the kingdom and being crowned. There is life and the crown of life; there is righteousness and the crown of righteousness. The crowns are only for those who reach the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. All children of God will have the benefit of the kingdom, but clearly many will fail to have positions of power and authority in the kingdom. This latter is the reward for service at any cost.

We have passages on the solemn examination which is to be held on our life-works as children of God.

2 Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This presents the universal assembly of Christ's servants at His judgment-seat, in the sky of course, and most likely just where Satan now sits in his misrule of the world. If we drop the italicised words of the Authorized Version from the latter part of the verse, it would read: "that every one may receive the things in body, according

to that he hath done," etc. That is, at Christ's judgment seat we shall receive in resurrected body things according to what we are now doing in the mortal body. The intermediate state is but a parenthesis in our bodily career on earth, a career arrested by death and renewed by resurrection. Meanwhile the dead in Christ enjoy in His presence above a happy rest from the suffering service of the mortal body, but they also eagerly await their return into the body to take up earthly activity in power, without suffering or hindrance of any kind.

1 Cor. iii. 12-17. Two kinds of works are here defined, the durable and the perishable. "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." The trial of our works by Jesus Christ when we are gathered to Him in the skies will reveal perfectly of which sort our works are. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." The fire is the Spirit of God. He is the inspiration and power of the true works; and when He touches our works as the witness in that day, whatever has not been done in His fire will consume under His fire. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," i. e., loss of all reward: "but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." This shows the entire difference between salvation in the kingdom and reward in the kingdom. It also shows the sinfulness of saying, in mock humility, that one will be satisfied if one only gets into the kingdom without caring for any reward. It will be a great dishonor and grief to the Lord and to us not to get any reward in that day.

The scale of reward is represented to be most remarkable. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21). Elevated from the position of a servant to that of a ruler! And rewarded for fidelity in a few things by being given authority in many things! Similarly the scale of reward is shown in Lu. xix. 17, etc. "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Again, an even more remarkable illustration of this scale of reward is given in Matt. x. 42: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." We have some remarkable samples of the Master's appreciation of service. For instance, the poor widow's mites (Mark xii. 41-44); the alabaster box of ointment, "She hath wrought a good work upon me," "She hath done what she could" (Mark xiv. 3-9); the good Samaritan (Lu. x. 30-37).

It has already been intimated that service costs suffering, and that the reward in the kingdom will be practically measured by the suffering borne in service now. It is said of an eminent saint of centuries ago, Saint Theresa, that she appeared after her death to a certain person and told her that she had been rewarded only for her pains, but had not received one drachm of reward for so many ecstasies and revelations and comforts, which she had enjoyed in this world. Our suffering is of two kinds mainly: first, that which we endure in being inwardly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus; secondly, that which we enter into for others, especially the Lord's people, that they may be built up in Him. Very many passages emphasize this

close and important relation between present suffering and future reward: "If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together" (Ro. viii. 17); "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Ti. ii. 12); "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pe. iv. 13).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

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